Keeping shop, shaping place:
The vernacular curation of London's ad hoc consumption spaces

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PhD thesis

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I, Maria Hunt, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is clearly stated.

Signed:

15 May 2015

For London — a continual source of inspiration. And for Nicholas and Rowan, who helped me explore it, each in their own way.

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Abstract

This thesis explores material and practice in the ad hoc shops of a London neighbourhood. These discount shops, corner shops, kiosks, and souvenir stands are not organised or managed according to top-down design strategies, but emerge from everyday rhythms of shopkeeping and the heterogeneity of their materials. Overall the project asks: how do these everyday ad hoc shops work through and on various powerful urban forces? It draws from wider debates about everyday places, retail geographies, and city building and is driven by intellectual impulses concerning material geographies and the politics of improvisation. It sees these shops – and the neighbourhood that houses them – as powerful assemblages of animated matter and approaches shopkeeping as a meaningful material practice. Insights into the shops were gained by in-shop and visual ethnography, interviews with officials, and discussions with shopkeepers. The alternate format of this thesis resonates with the complexity and contradictions of the shops and represents an experiment in visual storytelling. Stories of material, practice, and politics are woven through four empirical chapters. The first introduces the neighbourhood and shops, and outlines external interests in managing the shops' matter. Secondly, I detail the work and material of shopkeeping – stocking, displaying, rejigging, making do – and the moral economies of these vernacular curatorial practices. Thirdly, I explore the interdependence of the shops and the brands they offer, outlining how they work together. The last empirical chapter focuses on the precarity of the shops and the translocality of their keepers. The concluding chapter summarises themes running throughout the thesis: the politics of material difference; the spontaneity and liveliness of material; the aesthetics of order and disorder; creative practice and domestication; and the politics of affective atmospheres. It reflects on the potential of ad hoc-ness and ad hoc shops in the city, and the politics of their recognition.

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INT. CALLING CARD
Sim Card • Electrical
Hardware
Household Goods
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Introduction

An opening into a world of shops: this thesis begins by outlining a sprawling journey through ad hoc retailing. Improvisatory, informal, and convivial – ad hoc shops are curated through the everyday practice of shopkeepers. Together, creative practice and vibrant matter craft a distinct material texture and affective atmosphere. The micro-geographies of the shop matter, but also fold in – and fold into – other intensities in the city. A set of theoretical themes – concerning the politics of material difference, the liveliness of matter, the aesthetics of order and disorder, creative practice and domestication, and the politics of affective atmospheres – weave through the shop and along a set of chapter registers, which concern the city, material and practice, the brand, the precarity of the shop, and the translocality of their keepers. The points of intersection between these themes and registers each offer a different approach to the question propelling this research: how do these everyday ad hoc shops work through and on various powerful forces of the city?

Opening

The thesis concerns everyday shops and their relationships to the city. It is also about the informality and spontaneity of urban life, and about recognising marginalised forms of vernacular creativity.

In this project, I explore the material assemblages and practices of shopkeeping within retail spaces that I term "ad hoc." For my research, this includes corner shops, discount stores, newsagents, food and wine shops, hardware stores, independent grocers, souvenir stores, and shops that combine these sorts of businesses under one roof. It also comprises kiosks that repair shoes, cut keys, and sell souvenirs, flowers, luggage and weather goods, produce, clothing, and convenience foods. In these everyday places, vernacular creativity meets commercial culture. Unlike most conventional retail environments, the things in these shops are not organised according to holistic narratives of design. Nor are they subject to plan-o-grams like chain stores. Instead, objects are curated through the everyday practices and improvisations of the shopkeeper. As a result, these shops share a distinct material feeling and affective atmosphere – an ad hoc aesthetic based on resourcefulness and sincerity.

Through the thesis, I pay close attention to the meaningful micro-geographies of the shop (Gregson et al. 2002a), but also tie their local practice and heterogeneous materials to larger forces in the neighbourhood, the city, and around the world. I ask how these shops fit in. In particular, I investigate how the curation of stuff intersects with the material complexities of city building, the value of global brands, and the precarious lives of translocal shopkeepers. Empirically, my work was undertaken in one specific neighbourhood of central London. The area sits across the wards of Bloomsbury, King's Cross, and Holborn in the borough of Camden, which captured a diversity of people, interests, and material.

I explored the shops through a mixed set of research methods, which grew from in-depth ethnographies. My ethnographies were performed through work in a kiosk and with a camera in hand. In Chapter Three, I outline how the style of the thesis is connected with its content and my use of visual ethnography. The visual qualities and atypical format of the thesis will already be apparent. Through the document, I work with layout and visual material in a variety of ways. Photographs, for example, are variously presented in tension with the text, as illustrations of phenomena, as evocations of the shops' feeling and material, and also within short photo essays that draw out particular themes. Later in this chapter, I describe this mode of visual storytelling as one of the original contributions of this work.

Before presenting my arguments, I want to define some terms introduced in my thesis title: Keeping shop, shaping place: The vernacular curation of London's ad hoc consumption spaces. Here, I describe my use of "ad hoc," "vernacular," and "curation." Translated in Latin as "for this," ad


DOROTHY PERKINS
BUR TO
TELEPHONE
TELEPHONE
Lebara mobile
NEWS VENDOR KIOSK
Newspapers, Magazines, Tobacco, Cold Drinks
Sweets, Crisps, International Phone Cards
COLD DRINKS
SWEETS
CRISPS
CIGARETTES
TOBACCO
LONDON MAPS
LONDON PLEASURE GARDENS
GRAND OPENING
PARADISE GARDENS
SATURDAY 30 JUNE & SUNDAY 1 JULY 2012
FREE ENTRY
www.londonpleasuregardens.com/paradisegardens
A FREE FAMILY FESTIVAL
COLD DRINKS
SWEETS
CRISPS
CIGARETTES
TOBACCO
PRIVATE EYE
At any time
No loading at any time

hoc suggests a one-off solution for a task at hand. The ad hoc hints at spontaneity, informality, and improvisation. Since my project's inception, the term has been useful – as both an adjective and a noun – to describe the creative practice and the materiality of these independent shops. The ad hoc expresses the shops' aesthetic: somewhat roughhewn, lively, honest, and heterogeneous – a sum of visible parts. Though it suits the shop, ad hoc sensibilities work through places and processes that are less informal too. As I show through the thesis, the city and the brand may also be produced "on the hoof."

There is something of the ad hoc in the air. In 2013, Jencks and Silver's cult classic "Adhocism: The case for improvisation" was republished for the first time since its original release in 1972 (Jencks & Silver 2013). These architectural theorists celebrate the immediacy of consumer creativity and detail how people resourcefully reimagine materials at hand. The book has a politics too. For Jencks and Silver, adhocism is a challenge to mass consumer culture, the doctrines of modernism, and the veneration of the professional. In Chapter Two, I expand on the adhocism of Jencks and Silver and my relationship to it.

Secondly, my use of "vernacular" requires some elucidation. Notions of the ad hoc work in tandem with this term, though, for me, the vernacular passes up the ad hoc's eureka moments of creation and impulse to problem solve for a deeper knowledge and history in practice. It also gestures towards a connection to place. The vernacular suggests something that is grown from and shared within a local milieu. It is lived, contextual, and has specificity. It also suggests openness, community values, and conviviality, while ignoring the orthodoxies of design, conventional economies, and expert structures (see Illich 1973; Markusen 2010; Shorthouse 2004). Vernacular practices are non-elite; they are mundane and social, developed and shared in the realm of everyday life (see Edensor et al. 2010).

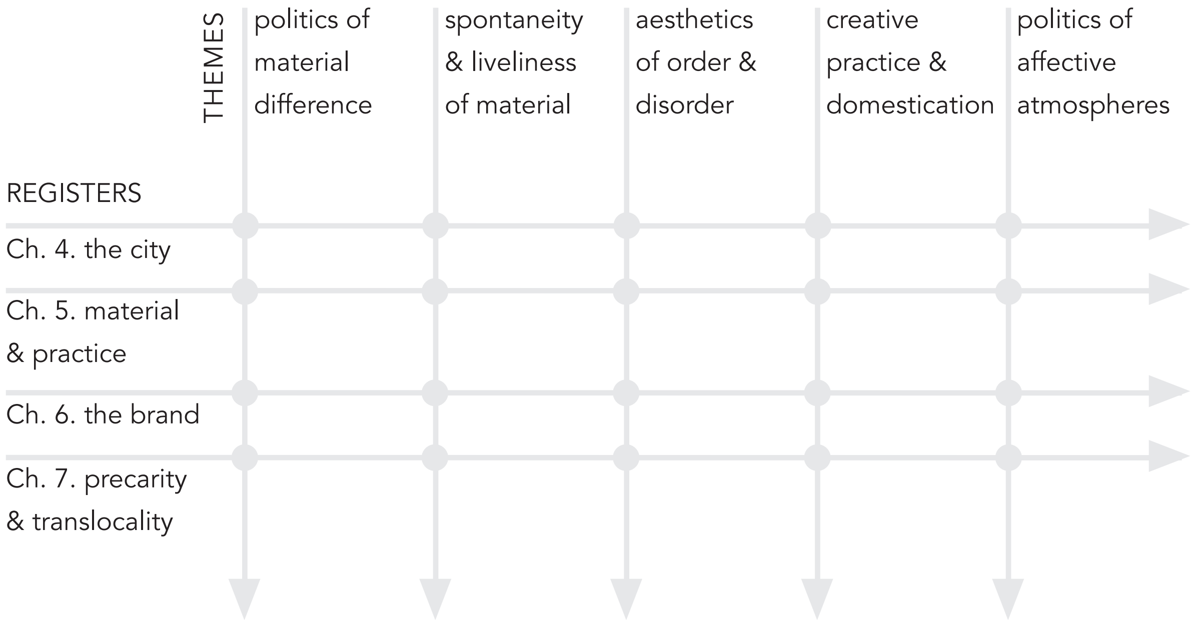
Finally, my treatment of "curation" calls for definition. Through the thesis, I use curation interchangeably with shopkeeping and organisation. It is used to describe the attentive and meaningful organisation of material in the shop. As described with more detail in Chapter Two, it knowingly draws from museological traditions to elevate the practice of shopkeeping. By recasting everyday material practice in this way, I endeavour to highlight the mundane work in the shop as a creative project.

As an additional note, I refer to all the shops, kiosks, and stalls in my project as "ad hoc shops." Furthermore, I group newsagents, food and wine stores, confectioners, and convenience stores together under the label "corner shop." Admittedly they are not all on the corner.

Research themes & thesis structure

Overall, this thesis asks: how do everyday ad hoc shops work through and on various powerful urban forces? Within this overarching question, the research has a wider set of intersecting themes and registers. The registers – organised by chapter – define the "urban forces" referred to in my research question, namely: the city, the material and practice, the brand, and the precarity and translocality of the shop. The themes relate to how this "work" happens. As they thread through the empirical chapters, the registers offer different inflections on these themes. These themes are: the politics of material difference; the spontaneity and liveliness of material; the aesthetics of order and disorder; creative practice and domestication; and the politics of affective atmospheres.

The thesis is presented over eight chapters. Each chapter opens with an abstract before launching into my content. I typically exclude introductions, but outline a short summary for each chapter in its conclusion. Following this introductory chapter I present: two contextual chapters, which detail my theoretical and practical concerns; four empirical chapters, which explore how these themes work across registers; and one reflective chapter, which revisits the thematic threads that weave through the thesis. Here, I outline these chapters in turn.




TOBACCO
NO ID NO SALE!

Chapter Two, entitled "**Impulses**," sets out the empirical and theoretical work driving this project. To start, I present scholarly approaches to the everyday – exploring it as both a place of politics and a place of affective meaning. Notions of the everyday are important to my project, both because I highlight the shops as meaningful in a local context and because I connect their mundane materials and practices with politics of the city, the brand, and identity through the thesis. I argue that the everyday is not only where life occurs, but also where change may be made and the politics of difference are played out. In the second section of the chapter, I present existing literature on shops, from the spectacular to the banal. I pay particular attention to work highlighting affect, feeling, and atmosphere, and existing research on shops akin to mine. Here, I carve out my unique position in the shops literature: one which stays very close to material and creative practice, while addressing urban politics. In a third section, I set out my two major interests in material geographies: in how we make meaning with things and in how materials work on a more affective register. In the first of these currents, I highlight the connections between my project and museological literature, asking what it means to think of shopkeeping as a curatorial practice. I argue that broadening the material geographies of curation into a commercial realm permits a revaluation of shopkeeping and a heightened attention to its material practices and knowledges. Following this, I shift tack with a focus on affective materialisms. This section presents my concern with both the agentic and vibrant matter of things and their immaterial qualities as well. I also outline how notions of enchantment capture the vibrant textures of place. Returning briefly to the shops literature, I contend that the affective atmosphere of retail places is important and something many shops and brands endeavour to engineer. The section on material is concluded with an outline on theories of assemblage, which are arguably useful to understand the goings-on in the shop and their relationship to other powerful forces outside. In the final section, I describe the ad hoc and its politics. I return to Jencks and Silver's (2013) adhocism and also highlight popular and scholarly interest in the improvisatory: in DIY urbanisms, in work on craft and making, in the creative economy, and in the research on innovations in the Global South. I ask not only about why the ad hoc has captured the imagination, but also what this popular celebration includes and excludes. I foreshadow arguments that run across the thesis about the politics of difference and affective atmospheres by asking why the ad hoc shops are not often revered in the same way. These varied theoretical and empirical impulses drive the investigations and analysis presented through the thesis.

Whereas Chapter Two highlights my material concerns, Chapter Three focuses on my concerns for practice. Entitled "**Approach**," this chapter has three main foci, detailing the spirit in which I approached the shop, my interests in practice, and what I did through my own practice of research. At the outset, then, I reflect on how my background intersected with those of my participants and shaped how I came to see the shops. This is followed by an explanation of how I negotiated difference through the project – both the shops' aesthetic difference compared to conventional commercial spaces and the social difference of the shopkeepers. My approach sought to avoid tendencies to romanticise, exoticise, and essentialise the shops and their keepers. Secondly, I pick up some theoretical loose ends from Chapter Two, expanding on my concerns with practice. I argue that practice theory is particularly valuable to my focus on everyday shop work, and navigate through a number of models, drawing promiscuously from multiple approaches to support my concerns for work, affect, politics, and materials. The third part of the chapter outlines how I executed my interest in those concerns and substantiates the methodological choices made. I begin by detailing how I selected the site, identified the


10 SECONDS
OPEN 5AM-3AM DAILY
KEY CUTTING
KEY CUTTING
SHOE REPAIRS
KEYS CUT
SHOE REPAIRS
SHOE REPAIRS
Shoe Repairs Key Cutting
While - U - Wait
Locks and Padlocks
TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD W1

shops, and walked the neighbourhood. I then describe the role of participant-observation in my ethnography, which included work in a local convenience kiosk with one shopkeeper and experience navigating the material politics of revitalisation with another. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of my visual ethnography – setting out how and why I used image-making in my project. After a more general discussion, I explain how photography was instrumental in furthering some theoretical aspects of my project by paying attention to ambiguity, agency, hierarchy, and embodied encounters. Following this, I briefly note supplemental investigations undertaken including interviews and historical research, how I analysed my field notes and images, and the usefulness of my research blog. In the final section of the chapter, I describe and justify the presentation of the thesis, arguing that style has substantive implications. I explain how this work is an experiment in visual storytelling, which uses an ad hoc montage of writings, photographs, field notes, quotes, photomontage, maps, diagrams, and sampling from elsewhere. As a curated collection of different narratives, the thesis acknowledges that ad hoc shops are difficult and multiple. Overall, the chapter argues for a mixed, open, and sensitive approach to these places.

Chapter Four – entitled "**City building and vernacular practice**" – is focused on the register of the city. It opens with a narrated walking tour. This walk through my study area highlights the ad hoc-ness of the city and presents it as an assemblage of materials, forces, bodies, and sensations. As well as tuning into vernacular processes of city building, it pays attention to changes happening at a larger scale, particularly around King's Cross. In a second section, I introduce the shops, first describing their material relationship to the neighbourhood – through their forecourt, windows, and signage – and then present their material-social relationship to the world around them. In both their materiality and conviviality, I argue that these shops are a meaningful part of the neighbourhood, but I also show them to be aesthetically contentious. This leads to the third section, on managing matter, which connects to the thesis' themes concerning the politics of material difference and affective atmospheres and the aesthetics of order and disorder. Drawing out threads from the walking tour, I highlight forces working towards the material management of the neighbourhood: the acceleration of neighbourhood change spurred by the King's Cross redevelopment; the rise of business improvement districts, neighbourhood associations, and their branding efforts; and the political interest in high street revitalisation. Here, urban policy connects with affective atmosphere. I argue that these entities imagine particular affective qualities of place, notions of vibrancy, and material that are at odds with the vitality and heterogeneity of the ad hoc shops. I contend that the affective atmospheres of the shops are not only embodied and sensed, but also realms of value and taste. As a result, I show how displacement is occurring on a material level; purification is not only social, but material. These shops are positioned as out of place. Despite this pressure, I argue that the vibrant material of the shop works against forces that try to limit the material expression, testing the possibilities for urban space and its efforts at urban order.

Chapter Five, entitled "**Keeping the ad hoc shop: Everyday practices of vernacular curation**," stays close to the practice and material in the shop. It details the everyday tasks of shopkeeping, including mundane activities of stocking and storing, shelving goods, repairing and maintenance, making change, and waiting. It also details the curation of the displays, daily work of strategising, and the logics that work through that curation. The chapter pays particular attention to the role of materials in this work. Drawing out themes concerning the spontaneity and liveliness of matter, and creative practice and domestication, I argue that ad hoc shops are spaces of distributed vernacular creativity


CARDS
HERE
EA


Salt & Vinegar
durex
extra safe
fetherlite
SALTED
peanuts
Juice tree
Trident
Splash
Orbit
KitKat
WIN 2012
Extra
Polo
original
HOT SOUP

(Edensor et al. 2010), where creativity works in dialogue with the agency of the shop's material and the shopkeepers' embodied knowledge of that material. I contend that these commercial shops are made personal through these co-constitutive practices. Also, by contrasting ad hoc shopkeeping practice to retail science, I argue that shopkeepers' intuitive and embodied methods often "get it right." Ad hoc curation, then, is loose, but responsive, purposeful, and measured. I propose that creative reworking with material demonstrates an ethics of attentiveness and sincerity that is felt in the shops' affective atmosphere and material.

My attention to the personalisation of commercial space is carried through to Chapter Six, which details the relationship between the shops and forces of the brand. "**Ad hoc-ness and the brand**" presents this affiliation as complex, intimate, and mutually beneficial. In the first section, I describe how the brand works through the shop via the labour of brand managers, who deploy material and retail science to shape the shop's affective atmosphere. I show how, and why, shopkeepers make space for the brand, but also argue that through creative practices of domestication – and in conjunction with lively materials – the shops absorb and rework the brand to give it new textures and local meaning. The shop engages the politics of difference by multiplying the meanings and materials of the brand and its objects. As such, though I present the brands as an intrinsic part of the shops' heterogeneous assemblage and affective atmosphere, this is not a colonisation. In this chapter, I also explore the brands' relationship with the city via the shop. The tension between the brands in the shop and neighbourhood branding initiatives conjures the politics surrounding aesthetics of order and disorder. Finally, I show how a conventional binary between "global brand" and "local shop" is complicated by the brand's ad hoc mode of working and the shopkeepers' desire for the stability of corporate attachment. In conclusion, I argue that the shops constitute ad hoc brandscapes, visibly made up composites of trademarks, logos, and attachments, which creatively adapt and sample brands for local purposes.

The final empirical chapter sees global made local in another way. Entitled "**Precarity and translocality**," the chapter attends to those two issues in turn and highlights how they are connected. Through the chapter, I raise a set of politics around material and difference to describe other ways the ad hoc shop is judged. In the first section, I present the current retail challenges facing all independent shops. While the government is trying to "save the high street," a number of policy interventions have been counter-productive. As well as facing these universal challenges, many ad hoc shopkeepers contend with struggles of newness and with being labour market outsiders. I argue that a state of hyper-precarity pervades some shopkeepers' lives, not as a result of their ethnicities, but of their particular place and time. Many of these challenges manifest in financial hardship, which have social impacts as well as material, design, and management implications for the shops. In the second section, I use the notion of topology to describe the translocality of shopkeeping. I argue that objects in the shop fold space together, maintaining and creating relationships – both personal and professional. This section addresses the shops' relationships to the neighbourhood in two ways which broach the affect of multicultures and belonging. First, I argue that the material in the shop may be conflated with the racialised bodies of the shopkeepers, which harbours the potential to position both the shops and their keepers as "out of place." Second, I consider how the everydayness of the shops might – or might not – be sites of meaningful exchange. To conclude, I reflect on the connections between multiculture and the ad hoc. Both play to a politics of order and disorder and offer promise in their untidiness.

In **"Contemplating the ad hoc,"** I return to the themes outlined earlier in this chapter to draw out the conclusions from the research. To begin, I approach a thesis summary by way of these themes that run across the chapter registers. I then reflect on the contributions of this work, which are modest, but threefold: methodological, theoretical, and political. The methodological contribution concerns the visual approach I take in this thesis. In this final chapter, I consider the success and the challenges of this approach. I also present the theoretical contribution, which involves the connections I make between processes of urban change and my material and affective concerns for the city. In particular, I argue that gentrification may involve not only the social, but also the material purification of space, and that affective atmospheres are not just felt through the body, but wrapped up in notions of taste and value. The political contribution of this thesis works through popular and policy discourses concerning the "death of the high street" and the "failure of multiculturalism." I argue that the vibrant matter in shops may animate the city in a different way and also craft a texture of place that accommodates difference. After suggesting some openings for future research, I contemplate the meaning of ad hoc-ness in relation to the city and city building. Here, I suggest that the ad hoc may leave space to imagine alternatives for the city. To realise its possibilities, I call for shifts in planning that not only leave space open for diverse material expressions, but also avoid over-determining its affective register. In a final section, I argue for recognition of the creativity, sincerity, and resourcefulness of ad hoc shops, but also explore how complicated that recognition may be.

This introductory chapter presented the subject, themes, and structure of the thesis. With its map laid out, I now turn to Chapter Two to describe the impulses driving this project.

2

Impulses

A diverse set of empirical and theoretical concerns propel this project along its path from the trivial to the political. As the place where life begins (Lefebvre 1984), so too the thesis begins in the realm of the everyday, considering its politics, possibilities, and affects. The everyday also brings us into a world of shops, spectacular and commonplace. This literature casts light on the ad hoc shops in London, and also reveals an opening for the work here: an attentive focus on the material of shops, whilst drawing connections to larger urban forces. This attention to material and its geographies implicates the thesis' core intellectual impulses. Material concerns run from curation as a meaningful material practice, to the vibrant and affective qualities of things, to notions of material assemblages. The assemblage is interested in the ad hoc; it is not alone. The improvisatory has captured popular and scholarly attention and imagination. But not all ad hoc-ness is revered in the same way, provoking a politics of material difference.

Weight of the ordinary

This thesis takes everyday places, materials, and practices seriously. Discussed variously as the mundane, the banal, and the ordinary, the everyday is where life happens (Lefebvre 1984). These happenings have both political and affective resonances. In this section, I explore scholarly interest in everyday places as sites of resistance and assurance, power and feeling, and suggest how these impulses may weave together through my work here.

The everyday is composed of taken-for-granted activities, practices, and relationships. It is also a realm of politics. For Bourdieu (1977) it is here where life is ordered, expectations are set, people are educated, and the social is reproduced. Lefebvre sees everyday life as a modern concept – a set of conditions under capitalism. For him, it is a contradictory space between "illusion and truth, power and helplessness; the intersection of the sector man controls and the sector he does not control" (Lefebvre 2008: 40). As a Marxist thinker, he also sees the everyday as a place of alienation, where commodity consumption stands in for meaningful experiences, which are evacuated by capitalism as it makes and remakes itself. But it is also a place of potential.

In 1968, Lefebvre wrote that everyday life is "the inevitable starting point for the realization of the possible" (1984: 14). By recognising the everyday and its boredom – and through the movements and rhythms of bodies – we may open up space to challenge the current system and imagine a different future. David Pinder (2013) has reflected on Lefebvre's notions of utopia, describing them not as an escape from life – as utopias are so often thought to be – but as rooted in the happenings and spaces of the everyday. Moreover, utopianism, here, is not a way to "lock down futures," but unfold possibilities through imagination and dreams (Pinder 2013: 3). Through emancipatory moments of presence, the routines of life may be jolted to produce something new. For Lefebvre, these moments hold a promise for an alternative to a world stifled by capitalism and are wrapped up in notions of the right to the city.

Among social theory heavyweights, Lefebvre is not alone in investing in the possibilities of mundane experience. Michel de Certeau (1984), for example, also sees the everyday as a contested space where the structures of power may be challenged. His thoughts on the everyday work through a dialectic: institutional strategies create environments in which users act through various doings or tactics. For de Certeau, the practice of everyday life privileges individual creativity and details how people appropriate, individualise, and subvert mass cultures through "tactics of consumption" (de Certeau 1984: xvii). This theme of creative resistance is important to my work and something I return to in Chapter Six on the brand. Not unlike the brand's view of its power, at the level of the urban, strategies hold a unified view of cities. By contrast, though they may not enjoy this view of the totality, people moving through the city do so in tactical ways that cannot be anticipated or controlled. Though he is criticised for romanticising resistance and for the dualism he establishes between views from the institutions above and the street below (see Pinder 2005b), de Certeau sees everyday life as a form of creative resistance, which confronts the structures of the powerful and, accordingly, escapes their definition. Though tactics subvert the intentions of strategies, compared to Lefebvre's notions of the everyday, de Certeau's tactics may be limited by their partial apprehension of strategies, which restricts their ability to rework place (Pinder 2011). In either case, the everyday is a place of politics that may be reimagined through ordinary practice.

Politics and potential emerge through everyday exchange and encounter. In this project, the political promise of the everyday is highlighted in how it confronts revitalisation schemes, recasts the brand, and reworks notions of multiculture. Across a number of registers, then, the ad hoc shop engenders an everyday politics of difference. Appreciating how everyday places and practices are influential in the development and change of multicultures is particularly important for my work here.

The politics of multiculture and identity have been widely discussed as lived out through everyday experience and practice in general (Back 1996; Hall 2012; Pieterse 2007; Wise & Velayathan 2009), and through everyday urban encounters in particular (Amin 2002; Binnie et al. 2006; Laurier & Philo 2006; Massey 2005; Watson 2009). As expanded in Chapter Seven, these social geographies of encounter are optimistic about the everyday city's ability to provide space to practice cosmopolitanisms and develop skills needed to come to terms with difference. Valentine (2008) cautions that, although meaningful exchange is possible, contact with others does not necessarily signal an ethics of care or respect for difference. Still, for Valentine (2008) there is more promise in the everyday practices of recognition and exchange than in engineered multicultural events and government policies (see also Amin 2002). The everyday makes space for "a politics of small achievements" (Swanton 2010a: 464). It is here – in the virtual spaces of the banal overflow – that politics has potential and "everything is still to be won" (Seigworth 2000: 23, citing Hebdige).

Binnie and colleagues (2007) remind us that resistance and challenge are only one aspect of everyday experience. Routines and ordinariness also offer security, comfort, and warmth (Beck 1992, cited by Binnie et al. 2007). As part of this, the everyday is a place of textures and feelings. Indeed, as I highlight through the thesis, ad hoc shops are meaningful in their feeling, familiarity, and complex textures of place. The everyday has been understood by others in these sorts of terms. For Kathleen Stewart (2007: 1), "[t]he ordinary is a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life." The everyday is a residue that escapes (Seigworth 2000: 233). It is just beyond the grasp of knowledge – unrealisable – but it is there. The everyday is simultaneously nothing and everything. Stewart (2007: 12) writes that:

> The ordinary is a circuit that's always tuned in to some little something somewhere.
> A mode of attending to the possible and the threatening, it amasses the resonance in things.
> It flows through clichés of the self, agency, home, a life.
> It pops up as a dream. Or it shows up in the middle of a derailing. Or in a simple pause.
> It can take off in flights of fancy or go limp, tired, done for now.
> It can pool up in little worlds of identity and desire.
> It can draw danger.
> Or it can dissipate, leaving you standing.

Though elusive, the everyday is forceful and resonates with affective power. Whereas the banal, the mundane, and the everyday have been discussed as a realm of alienation (Lefebvre 2008; Marx 1964; Debord 1995) and subjectification (Foucault 1980), Binnie et al. (2007: 516) ask if it cannot also be "sites of assurance, resistance, affect, and potentialities." For Stewart (2007: 9), it is "life lived on the level of surging affects." As such, the everyday has been spatialised as a place of affect, movement, and feeling. For Seigworth (2000: 232):

> the 'unperceived' of the banal overflow properly belongs to neither the subject nor the object of any encounter but to the movements and variations of intensity (as potential to affect or to be affected) that constitute a ceaselessly oscillating foreground/background or, better, an immanent 'plane' (i.e. this is an in-between with a consistency all its own).

The everyday politics of identity and difference may not be incongruous with these ordinary affects. As outlined previously, assembling these registers is one of my concerns here, as it is for others in the social sciences and humanities. Recently, Philip Crang (2010) celebrated the promise of research connecting everyday minutiae, experience, and affect with politics. The emergence of this work follows appeals to connect the affective with the political. As expanded in Chapter Three, these calls question the universalising tendencies of some work on affect and ask why the asymmetrical flow of affect and its power geometries seem inaudible to much research with affectual orientations (Lorimer 2008a; Merriman et al. 2008; Saldanha 2010; Tolia-Kelly 2006).

In his acknowledgment of this work, Crang (2010) cites Kathleen Stewart (2007) and Les Back (2007) as encouraging examples. For both authors, politics emerge through nuance; fragments, stories, and voices shape what is possible. Back develops C. Wright Mills' (1959) interests in connecting "personal troubles" with "public issues" through openness and sensory engagement. He argues "that social investigations that utilize a 'democracy of the senses' are likely to notice more and ask different questions of our world" (Back 2007: 8). The "public issues" he engages are in flux and composed of everyday affects too. Stewart (2007:1) writes that "neoliberalism, advanced capitalism and globalization" are "a scene of immanent force, rather than [...] dead effects imposed on an innocent world."

As I worked through this project, I endeavoured to keep the meanings, feelings, and affects of shops in dialogue with politics (see Goss 2004, 2006; Hartwick 2000); to "[awaken] an appreciation for the entanglement of politics and particulars, economics and intimacy" (DeSilvey 2007: 413). Whereas I do draw from an affective register to address issues of difference and the right to the city, I also pay attention to everydayness when it does not lead to these sorts of larger politics. Chapter Five, in particular, stays close to the practices and materials of the shop. As Stewart warns, choosing to concentrate on the ordinary only when it relates directly to bigger things risks missing the liveness of the present. Thus the way the ordinary is lived, the textures of place, and the intensity of feelings are worth addressing, whether they guide us towards larger politics or not. With a nod to Amin and Thrift (2002), Latham and McCormack (2004: 706) similarly write that "any materially engaged urban geography must be based upon an appreciation of the fact that affective economies are as important as political and symbolic economies." Again, from Stewart (2007: 16):

> There's a politics of being/feeling connected (or not), to impacts that are shared (or not), to energies spent worrying or scheming (or not), to affective contagion, and to all the forms of attunement and attachment. There's a politics to ways of watching and waiting for something to happen and to forms of agency – to how the mirage of the straightforward exercise of will is a flag

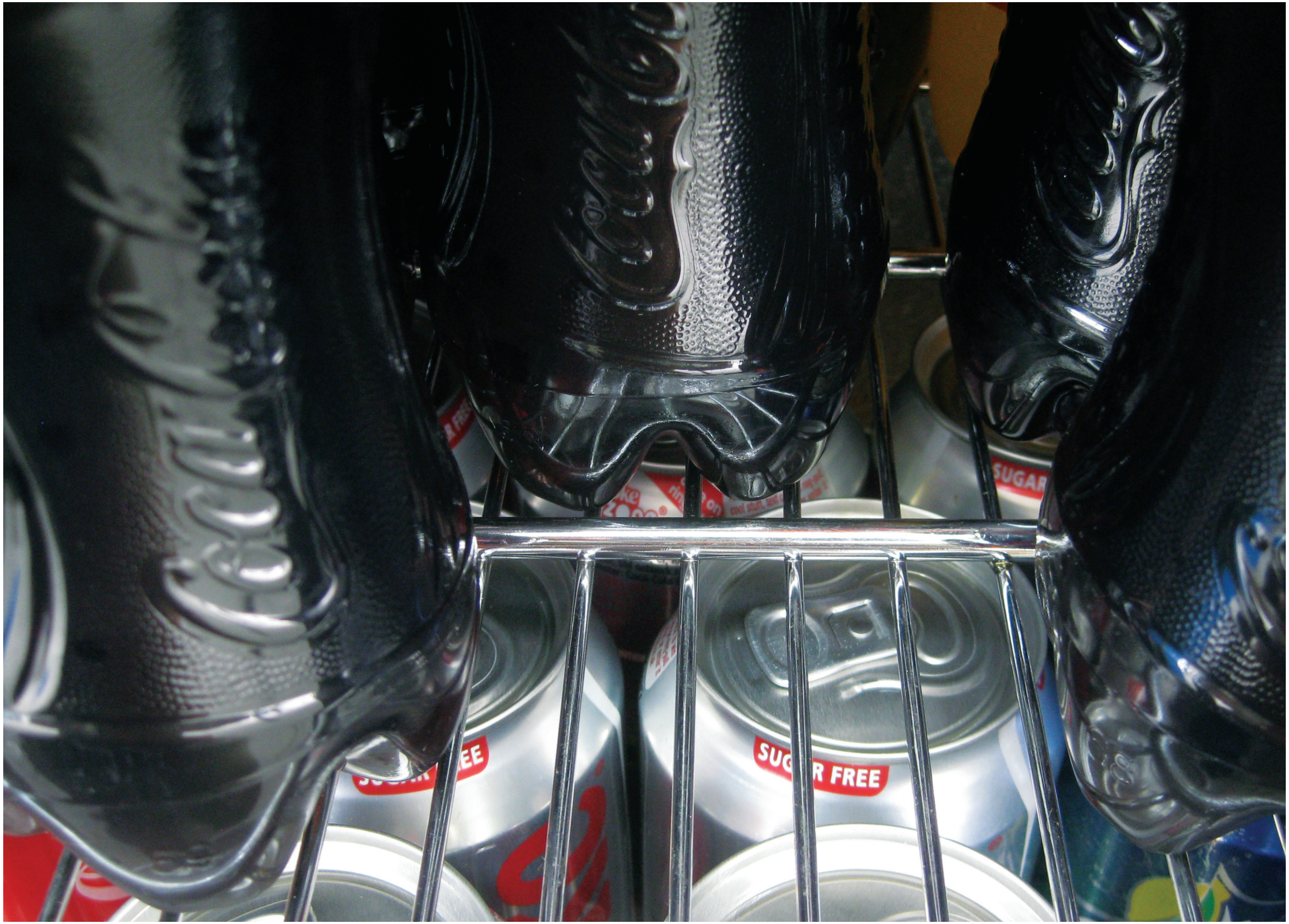
> waved in one situation and vicious, self-defeating deflation in another (as when someone of no means has a get-rich-quick daydream – a daydream to be free at last – that ends them up in jail). There's a politics to difference in itself – the difference of danger, the difference of habit and dull routine, the difference of everything that matters.

For Stewart, then, while bigger politics may bubble up to the surface, the ordinary politics of the everyday, constituted of events and feelings, are just as significant. A muted tone may speak louder than more conventional political critiques. Again, echoes are found in Latham and McCormack (2004: 709), who call for a similar approach. For them, such an approach:

> helps open up a range of novel and productive ways of thinking about how the urban comes to have the structure and consistency that it does – and that it does so in ways that a straightforward return to political economy fails to address adequately.

My approach concerns both the politics and the ordinary affects of the everyday. Sometimes they connect, sometimes they don't. Where they do, I argue not only that the everyday is where life occurs, but also where change may be made and the politics of difference are played out. In the chapters that follow, then, I tighten these threads, presenting how everyday work in the shops may energise and challenge the normalising forces of revitalisation schemes, the brand, and notions of multiculturalism.

As highlighted in the following pages, my approach to politics also pays special attention to the world of matter. By focusing on the liveliness of all matter and its shared materiality, Bennett (2010: 10) asks us to consider a politics that includes the nonhuman world to develop "a more ecological sensibility." Through the thesis, as well as focusing on the everyday politics of shops, this project broadens political debates about the urban – the right to the city, the politics of revitalisation, and the cultural economy – to encompass material concerns as well. But first, the focus on the everyday moves me into a discussion of the shops.

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Shop work

Within a world full of everyday spaces and practices, my focus is on common, un-branded retail environments. In this section, I outline existing literature that frames my interest in ad hoc consumption spaces. I first discuss tendencies in retail geography and consumption studies that highlight agency, feeling, and atmosphere. Within these overlapping fields, I define my interest in shops and describe why literature on the extravagant spaces of consumption is equally as useful to situate my work as the scholarship on smaller, informal shops. Within a growing body of literature on more everyday consumption spaces, I flesh out the existing work on small shops. I then present themes running through this work and what I intend to add.

Existing research considers a diversity of consumption spaces and processes. Retail geography has a long history of identifying new spots for shopping malls, analysing the location of shops in relation to demographic clusters, transportation nodes, and other services, and exploring retail planning strategies to stimulate urban and economic growth (Birkin et al. 2002; Cliquet 2006; Leyshon et al. 2008; Peterson 2004). Beyond this economically-driven scholarship, a "new retail geography" emerged that pays attention to – and takes seriously – the intersections of cultural logics, economic structures, and social aspects of retail. This shift, concurrent with the cultural turn (Cook et al. 2000), is concerned with the experience and creativity of consumption processes. Central to the new retail geography was a recognition of the relations between culture and economy (Jackson 2002; Lowe 2000; Miller 2002).

Opened up in part by Blomley (1994) and Wrigley and Lowe (1997, 2002), this area of scholarship heeds the agency of individual consumers and dynamism of space in processes – and practices – of production, distribution, and consumption. According to Gregson et al. (2002a: 1663) the value of this work is "in its ability to mobilise a view of retail space as actively (re)produced and open to contestation and challenge." Together with developments in consumption studies – and of particular interest to my project – this work also considers the emotional and social aspects of retail spaces and the meanings created and recreated through on-going processes of consumption (Crewe 2000; Miller & Rose 1997; Shields 1992; Wang & Lo 2007). As part of this, a focus has emerged on the process of consumption beyond an object's point of purchase to its use, ultimate disposal, and beyond (Gregson et al. 2007; Miller et al. 1998). As such, spaces of consumption have expanded beyond points of purchase to include the street, public spaces, the workplace, and the home. Since the cultural turn, the consumer and their meaningful practices of shopping have received great attention (Gregson et al. 2002b; Miller 1998; Miller et al. 1998). Although "retail spaces [are] brought into being, orchestrated, performed in interaction, and […] negotiated, accepted, resisted, and interpreted by consumers" (Gregson et al. 2002a), this is not my focus here. Fascinating though it is, the experiences of the consumer and sites inculcated in complex webs of consumption behaviours, are also not drawn out in this project. My interests lie closer to the shop shelves – in their material and in the meaningful and creative practices of shopkeepers. Here, I am working towards developing once neglected (Gregson et al. 2002a: 1663) "in-store geographies" and investigating their relationship to the city.

The literature embraces shops large and small. On the bigger scale, work has focused on the department store (Domosh 1996; Dowling 1991; Nava 1998), supermarkets (Bowlby 1997), the mall in North America (Goss 1993, 1999; Hopkins 1990; Johnson 1991; Jones & Simmons 1990), and regional shopping centres in the UK (Degen et al. 2008; Lowe 1993; Miller et al. 1998). Through the last 150 years, these shops have had significant impacts on urban and suburban environments, their economies, and the social lives of their users. They shifted culture as well as responding to it, by providing leisure and fantasy in addition to the provision of goods. The department stores in the 19th and early 20th century – the forebears of today's malls and shopping centres – were designed as focal points of community encounter and spaces where everyone – most notably women (Domosh 1996; Dowling 1991; Nava 1998) – could participate in the public realm. Shifts to a "modern" self-service model of layout design through the 20th century (Bailey et al. 2010; du Gay 2004) offered a hands-on experience which contributed to the fantasy lives of consumers (Bowlby 1997, cited in Wrigley & Lowe 2002). Subsequent rises in lifestyle shopping towards the end of the 20th century created new (branded) places of entertainment and social interaction (Wrigley & Lowe 2002).

Amid a body of scholarship on themed retail spaces and the experience economy (Bryman 2004; Gottdiener 2001; Hannigan 1998; Lukas 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Zukin 1991, 1998), the meaning, making, and atmosphere of the mall were taken seriously in early work by Goss (1993, 1999) and Hopkins (1990). These contemporary retail environments are described as seductive themed leisure spaces – representing other places and times – to craft particular affective and emotional experiences and escape the mundane (Hopkins 1990). Malls are both fantastical machines for shopping (Goss 1993: 33) and immersive three-dimensional theatres (Hopkins 1990). They encourage consumers to spend more time and – as a result – money. These utopian landscapes of consumption, and the commodities within them, evoke our dreams of authenticity. Goss (1993) asks how consumers might challenge these fetishised pseudo-public spaces of fantasy. He later suggests that we may critically examine their promises and dreams while still enjoying them as reminders of our desires (Goss 1999). More recent work by J.C. Miller (2014a; 2014b) on a middle-class Argentine mall asks similar questions and draws comparable conclusions to Goss, albeit through a lens of non-representational theory. He considers the engineered and spontaneous emergence of feeling and asks how politics and local technologies of affect shape atmosphere and the embodied experience of these retail environments (see also Degen et al. 2008).

For my purposes, the importance of the work on spectacular retail is threefold. First, it details the strategies deployed by retail designers, against which the ad hoc shops can be juxtaposed. I pick up the theories of retail science in Chapter Five. Second, some of this work considers the affect and feeling of retail places. Here, power in retail environments is not just related to retail capital, but is material, sensory, and everyday. Third, it considers how individuals may resist or reinterpret engineered affect. Practices of rejigging and domestication work through ad hoc shops and on the brands within them. These are themes I return to through the thesis, and especially in Chapters Five and Six.

There is much to draw as well from investigations into less dazzling retail environments. Around the turn of the last century, geographers opened up spaces that subverted traditional consumption spaces – the shopping centres and high street – in favour of the less spectacular (Crewe 2000). Some of these more informal spaces of retail and consumption include car boot sales (Gregson & Crewe 1994, 1997, 1998; Gregson et al. 1997); second-hand clothing and thrift shopping (Clarke 2000; Goodall 2000; Gregson et al. 2002a, 2002b; Horne & Maddrell 2002), spaces of repair (Bond et al. 2013; DeSilvey et al. 2014), and food fairs and markets (Cresswell 2008, 2012b; Coles 2014; Coles & Crang 2011; Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; Renting et al. 2003; Watson 2009). Although capital accumulation may still be the order of the day (Gregson & Crewe 1997), some of this retail challenges conventional capitalist economies, relying instead on an ethos of bartering and thrift, swapping, co-ops, and local trading, for example (Hughes 2005; Leyshon & Lee 2003). Beyond alternative types of retail, other work explores the margins in a different way, by highlighting retail in the suburbs, for example (Griffiths et al. 2008). Finally, there is a growing body of work on corner shops, independent businesses, stalls, and ethnically diverse retail strips. I expand on this work here, on account of its particular relevance.

Within geography, sociology, and anthropology, there is a growing body of literature on small independent shops. The work is described here in short and its themes fleshed out more below. Within geography, Jonathan Everts (2010, Everts & Jackson 2009) investigated notions of sociality, community, and cultural difference in immigrant-owned corner shops in Germany through practice-focused ethnographic research. Similarly, Pine's (2010, 2011) ethnography on Dominican corner shops – or bodegas – in Philadelphia explores how difference is navigated through practice and performance in these shops, and how citizenships are produced. In anthropology, Mankekar (2002) came to see Indian groceries in the San Francisco Bay Area – and the transnational circulation of materials within them – as sites of identity formation and negotiation. Closer to home, sociologist Suzanne Hall's work on the spaces of economic and cultural difference along Walworth Road (Hall 2010, 2011) and Rye Lane (Hall 2013) in London, has particular resonance with mine. She offers a fine-grained and material reading on issues of transnationalism/translocalism and belonging. Hall's ethnographic explorations detail the shops' interactions – materially, culturally, and socially – with the street and with the locals. Off the street her ethnography in a tailor's shop, and in a café, offers a sense of social and skillful micro-geographies and conviviality. As explored later, recent work by geographers Caitlin DeSilvey and James Ryan, and photographer Steven Bond (Bond et al. 2013; DeSilvey et al. 2014) shines a light on repair shops, illuminating the central roles of their materiality and sociality. Finally, there is a body of work from the Global South which draws attention to how important small neighbourhood shops are, not only economically and for the essential provision of goods (Bonnin 2004, 2005, 2006; Dannerhaeuser 1980; Ligthelm 2005; Silverio 1982; Tipple 2004; Tokman 1978), but also for their social benefits to local communities (Coen et al. 2008).

Much of the previous work on corner shops and small grocers privileges the shops' social aspects. Though my concerns are more materially and culturally oriented, this work is important for me. It concerns businesses akin to mine, but more importantly highlights the significance of everyday retail environments in place-making processes and how difference is negotiated in these sites. This literature works through the thesis, but is summarised here as well.

In the literature, shops are described as sites of place-making and community development, fostered through practice and social interaction. The informality of these shops makes them conducive to this convergence compared to other public and commercial places. So were the findings in Everts and Jackson's (2009) examination of consumers' experiences of small grocers in Germany, which considered how sociality in food shopping environments is shaped by discursive constructions of modernisation. In contrast to "modern" supermarkets, Everts and Jackson highlight a sense of trust and authenticity in small shops which is based on different social practices. These places are made meaningful not via the products, design, or nationality of the shopkeeper, but through the negotiations of social practices and interactions (Everts 2010).

In Everts' work and beyond, the background of shopkeepers raises issues of difference – a concern in my work as well. The social and economic exchange in everyday consumption spaces is often noted in the literature as a social leveler. These are places where different sorts of people share who they are. As discussed in Chapter Three, and again in Chapter Seven, coming together over economic exchange, materials, and practice may minimise social difference. Through daily shop practice in Germany, for example, notions of difference – and the fetishisation of ethnic identities – may be reworked or disregarded (Everts 2010). Similarly, Watson's (2009) work on the UK's markets found that through the commingling of people from various backgrounds over banal practices of work and leisure, new public spaces emerge, which are able to mediate social differences.

The identity of shopkeepers is often brought into focus through discussions of diversity, belonging, and urban citizenship. For example, Hall's (2013) work examines how citizenships are produced and made visible and invisible in changing urban contexts. Similarly, Pine's (2010) exploration of Dominican bodegas found that social interactions of shopkeeping and certain performances of "shopkeeper" earned urban citizenship and acceptance into the community. Elsewhere, Pine (2011) discusses the mobility, transnational citizenship, and community of the shopkeepers in relation to the experience of local communities. Being here and there may position shopkeepers on the outside of communities, but helps economically and in business practice.

Evidently, shops open their doors to discussions of transnationalism. These places embody and root complex global patterns of mobility (Hall & Datta 2010) and are produced through everyday interaction of bodies, which connect to other places and people (Hall 2010, 2011). Ideas of transnationalism and translocalism are explored in relation to the shopkeepers, their consumers, and the objects in motion. Mankekar (2002: 77), for example, sees Indian grocers as points of convergence for "people and objects on the move", where identity is constructed and "regimes of value" are exchanged (Mankekar 2002: 82). Here, versions of translocal culture are put on display.

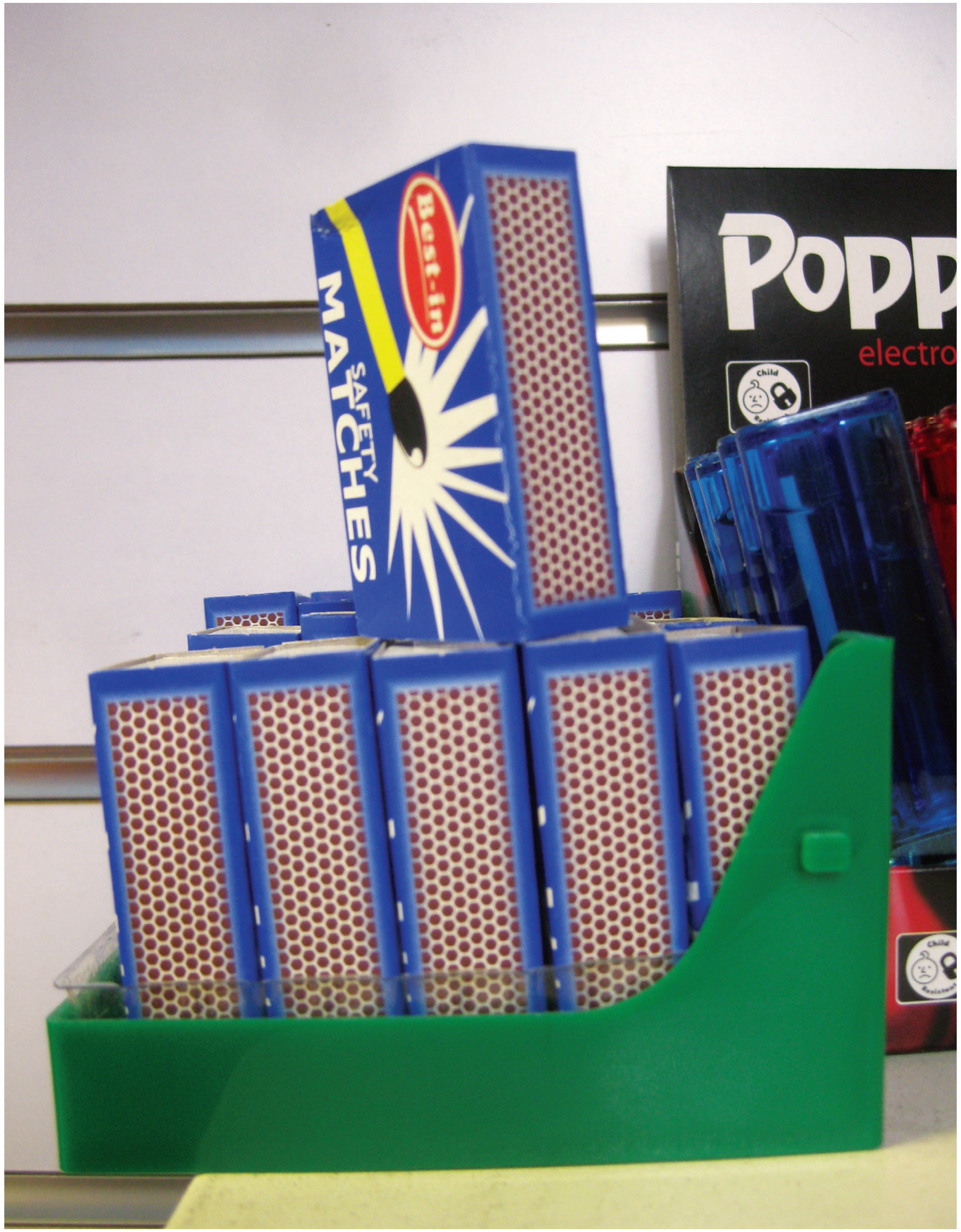
In some work, difference is also discussed through the material of shops. For Hall and Datta (2010), the materiality of shop front signage and objects along Walworth Road signals a translocal culture that is in the process of being made and becoming. The street is a place to negotiate difference. Hall (2011) identified how multiethnic independent businesses on the urban margins have made small-scale material adaptations to respond to larger challenges posed by the economic downturn and shifts in planning regulation. Looking closer still, she found that the everyday visual material – the organisation of objects in a pound shop or the display of exotic fruit in the corner shop – alert us to individual aspirations, cultural affinities, and economic situations. They embody translocal connections between London and other places and people (Hall & Datta 2010: 77).

Matter is particularly revealing too in the work of DeSilvey, Ryan, and Bond on shops of repair (Bond et al. 2013; DeSilvey et al. 2014). As further addressed in Chapter Five, their thoughtful visual and ethnographic attention to spaces of repair highlight micro-worlds of skill and texture. The detail with which they approached the shops is an apt reflection of the measured practical attunement carried out in them. The matter of shops and the objects within them resonate with stories of use and time.

Finally, previous work on shops has called for policy makers to acknowledge the social and cultural value of everyday shops and include them in current policy frameworks around localism and high street revitalisation (Hall 2011; Findlay & Sparks 2012). This theme and associated policy literature will be picked up in Chapter Four in discussions around neighbourhood branding initiatives, discourses around the "death" of the high street, and neighbourhood change.

My contribution to the literature brings a material reading of difference and place-making in these sorts of retail environments. It finds itself somewhere between the material attunement of DeSilvey and her colleagues and Hall's concern for multicultures and place-making, whilst also nodding to forces of the brand and politics of urban development. As outlined in Chapter One, my emphasis is on the organisation in the shops and the meanings created through that organisation. I investigate not just how stuff is curated in these informal spaces, but how it intersects with the value of global brands and with the lives of the translocal shopkeepers. In addition, I consider how the matter of these places factors into the material complexity of the city and its politics.

In adding to this work on shops, broader impulses emerge from literatures on material geography – via foci on curating, affective materialism, and assemblage – and on the politics of the ad hoc. These impulses drive the rest of this chapter.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Material geographies

This project draws out two lines of thought about the material world which will be highlighted here. Firstly, my attention to practices of curation is situated within a wide body of literature concerning our relationships with things and how we create culture with and through them. Secondly, I am concerned with the fleshy world of matter, its vitality, and affective potential. At the close of each of these sections, I outline how the ideas connect to literature on retail spaces. Subsequently, these two impulses are tied together through notions of the material assemblage, which offer ways to consider the ad hoc shop as a powerful heterogeneous collection.

Curating material geographies

Part of taking the everyday seriously here is observing the importance of its material. Driven by work in anthropology, material culture approaches highlight how the everyday use of objects makes meaning. The things around us mediate and shape our experience, our relationships, and our identities. Through processes of objectification – the entanglement of things, values, culture, and relations (Miller 1987, 1995, citing Hegel) – our material production of the world may seem strange to us. But for anthropologists like Daniel Miller (2005: 9), when we appreciate that "things are created in history or in imaginations we can start to understand the very process which accounts for our own specificity" and can act on this new understanding.

Though the material world is a fundamental part of us, its influence is not always obvious. Miller (1987: 85-108) writes about the "the humility of things" – how their power lies in their inconspicuousness. He tells us that:

> objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not "see" them. The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour, without being open to challenge. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so. (Miller 2005: 5)

Thus, the very everydayness of objects is part of their power. In the shop, the fact that objects are for sale may complicate the notions of their inconspicuousness, but our awareness of the objects does not preclude our potential blindness to their ordinary influence. The intuitive ways that we behave with objects foreshadows notions of practice and the affordance of things drawn out in Chapters Three and Five. Here, objects are wrapped up in the production of the social, and perpetuate its performances (Latour 2000). Indeed they have been discussed, by Appadurai (1986) and his followers, as having social lives of their own. Following objects helps understand their meanings and the politics emerged through their use, forms, and paths.

Because the social is embedded in the design of the world (Shove et al. 2007: 7), the material world tells us about who we are. Miller sees the stuff around us as a mirror which reflects the lives of those who came before and our own. He writes that the "world confronts us as material culture and continues to evolve through us" (Miller 2005: 8). As an extension, the landscape is a lived record of inhabitation, which "shows something of ourselves" (Ingold 1993: 152). Because we create culture with objects, understanding their production and organisation is important to understand what they mean.

Among a host of material concerns, geography is interested in ideas of curation and place. It has also tuned into related notions of ordering, collecting, and archiving. The emergence of museum geographies, in particular, has attended to these themes (see Geoghegan 2010). In my project, I borrow concepts and nomenclature from this area of study, drawing insights from another realm of "keeping." Here, I ask what it means to think of shopkeeping and the keeper in relation to the museum.

The "new" museology that emerged in the late 1980s critically and reflectively reconsiders the purpose of museums and their role in society (see Vergo 1989). Since then, debates about – and within – the museum have worked to re-examine the production of expert knowledge, probe its accessibility, develop new audiences, and include "other" perspectives – all which have served to shift ideas of museological authority (see Geoghegan 2010).

Like ad hoc shops, museums have been framed in terms of order and disorder. Historically, the modern museum is discussed as offering a remedy to the 19th century anxiety about disorder and anarchy (Hetherington 2014). Through codes of meaning and spatial narratives (Hetherington 1997), the complex and uncertain experiences of modern life were simplified through epistemological systems of classification (Hetherington 2006: 600). Through taxonomy, the museum assumed the authority to establish historical and cultural order (Hetherington 2014: 81, citing Donato 1979).

The way we classify and organise objects reflects our values and understandings of the world. Echoing Miller, Elsner and Cardinal (1994: 2) write that

> if classification is the mirror of collective humanity's thoughts and perceptions, then collecting is its material embodiment. Collecting is classification lived, experienced in three dimensions. The history of collecting is thus the narrative of how human beings have striven to accommodate, to appropriate and to extend the taxonomies and systems of knowledge they have inherited.

There is a politics and poetics to practices of collecting (Pearce 1995). For Hill (2006a, 2006b, 2007) an object's enchantment, biography, and associated flows of knowledge contribute to the process and development of its collection. What distinguishes the museum from other sorts of collecting is its mode of crafting experience. "If the modern world is experienced as all bustle and flux and disordered uncertainty then somehow the museum aims to become a still counter point for contemplation." (Hetherington 2014: 81). To achieve this, museums employ a singular narrative – a totality – that dissociates from any sense of disorder, complexity, or heterogeneity. However, in doing so, "the museum does indeed create little more than a fetishized spectacle of experience" (Hetherington 2006: 601).

Fabulated narratives, in which objects play a part, shape the way objects are understood (Hetherington 2014). By connecting to other spaces and times, one object can shift a collection's material networks and the topology of space (Hetherington 1997). Drawing from the work of Adorno and Blanchot, Hetherington (2014) explains that critiques of museums often focus on the displacement of objects from a meaningful and "sacred topos" of the world outside to the deadening environment of the museum, which uses the objects for its own narrative ends. The museum, critics argue, removes place from the experience of art and artefacts.

Hetherington (2006) discusses contemporary museums as spaces of distracted experience, and likens them to other spaces of entertainment: theme parks, shopping malls, tourist sites, heritage regeneration projects. As such,

> the curator is no longer merely an interpreter of artefacts placed with tiny labels in wooden cabinets for the connoisseur to pour over on a wet Sunday afternoon but an auteur engaged in the manufacture of the spectacle of cultural experiences on a grand scale with corporate sponsorship. (Hetherington 2006: 602)

Curators write culture.

As well as the organisation of things, this consumer orientation and sense of the spectacle brings the worlds of museums and shops together. The connections between the phantasmagorias of the museum with that of the shop were made by Walter Benjamin (1999: 403). Museums, he writes, are "dreamhouses of the collective" – alluring and disinteresting places of escape and fetish. An inspiration for Hetherington, Benjamin submits that the museum is part of the spectacle of the modern city that hides the past and present through its myth of progress. For Benjamin, the museum is a static form that enshrines capitalism, not unlike the department store.

> There are relations between department store and museum, and here the bazaar provides a link. The amassing of artworks in the museum brings them into communication with commodities, which – where they offer themselves en masse to passersby – awake in him the notion that some part of this should fall to him as well. (Benjamin 1999: 415)

Economic practices and places of exchange are important in Benjamin's work. Through his *Passagenwerk*, the city is presented as a space of commodity, display, consumption, and advertising. The experience of the fetishising consumer is paramount in the arcades (Gilloch 1995). The ways in which Benjamin explored modernity has been inspiring to my work here, in his attunement to the detail of things, the lives of marginal figures, and the texture of everyday experience. As discussed in Chapter Three, his use of montage has also provided a model for my work. Benjamin's focus on everyday consumption spaces was important to further his interests in highlighting the everyday and the invisible. Susan Buck-Morss (1989: 11) writes that:

> Surely these earliest, ur-shopping malls would seem a pitifully mundane site for philosophical inspiration. But it was precisely Benjamin's point to bridge the gap between everyday experience and traditional academic concerns, actually to achieve that phenomenological hermeneutics of the profane world which Heidegger only pretended. Benjamin's goal was to take materialism so seriously that the historical phenomena themselves were brought to speech.

I treat the everyday and its material with great attention here. In this project, I am broadening material geographies of curating – extending these material geographical impulses into the commercial realm – to consider how shop space is shaped through the curation of objects and how the shopkeepers play a curatorial role. I take shopkeeping seriously, focusing on the careful material curation of these spaces and on shopkeepers as keepers of collections. In doing so, I "recognise museological behaviour in other forms" (Kreps 2003: 459). This is not unlike the more popular use of the term curation.

Some geographers have recently engaged with notions of curation (see Dwyer & Davies 2010). For example, DeSilvey (2007a) used the language of curation to detail her practices with the remains on a Montana homestead. Her reflections highlight the ambivalent relationships between the lives of objects and the stabilising forces of order in the display of collections. Taking on more commercial settings, more recently, a set of sessions at the 2014 RGS-IBG conference considered curation in the realm of cultural economies. As it often does, geography takes its cue here from popular interests. In 2009, for example, *The New York Times*' Alex Williams described the fashionable use of the word in relation to club nights, hotel libraries, Tumblr sites, and beyond. He explains that the use of "curation" in non-museum settings first emerged in the mid-90s, and saw an explosion after 2000 (Williams 2009). As illustrated in Chapter Four, it has come to be used in urban design and public policy documents as well. While the professional role of museological curator still holds fast today, the increasingly commonplace use of the word does reflect a shift in the popular involvement in the creation of culture mentioned earlier. In *The Guardian*, Daniel Blight (2013) asked how and why the role of curator has been democratised. While the rise of public participation in museums may be at times tokenistic, he discusses the explosion of curated media online which seems to question the notion of experts as the gatekeepers of knowledge. "If you are part of culture," Blight argues, "then you are qualified to contribute to the arrangement of its artefacts" (2013: n.p.). This reorientation sheds curation of its elitism. As part of the growth of participatory culture (Jenkins 2006), consumers are positioned as active participants in making the world, as "prosumers" (see Ritzer & Jurgenson 2010). In the domestic realm, curation has also been used to describe meaningful personal geographies of display (see Ellis & Haywood 2006; Gregson 2007; Gregson & Crewe 2003; Hurdley 2006; Rose 2003a). My use of the word here works in similar ways.

The word curation – "to select, organise, and look after items in a collection or exhibition" (Oxford Dictionary 2014) – is derived from Medieval Latin curatus, which is from the Latin cura, or to care. As such, the curator is the carer of collections. Curating is a sort of keeping and has been described as such in a museological context. To be in someone's keeping is to be in their "care or custody" (Oxford Dictionary 2014). Keeping and curating, then, are both ways of caring for collections. Shopkeeping is about taking care of the shop, just as curating is about caring for a museological collection. As discussed in Chapter Five, by using "curating" over "managing" in the shop context, I hope to bring awareness to the attentiveness and material concerns of the shopkeepers and highlight their practice as one that can have meaning and a particular affective power. This elevates the practice of shopkeeping in an effort to acknowledge it as creative practice. My use of "collection" extends this notion of curation. Though I have found the term constructive through this project, I anticipate the difficulties of its use. Citing Krzysztof Pomian, DeSilvey (2007: 35) writes that "in order for a group of objects to qualify as a collection, the objects must lose their use-value and enter a protected realm out of economic circulation." Clearly objects in the shop are inextricably linked to networks of economic circulation; their eventual sale – their literal motion – is the modus operandi of their curation. But as outlined previously, the lines between collections and consumption are perhaps blurring in a museum context too.

I discuss some trends in retail science in Chapter Five, but here I want to briefly pick up on some work on retail geographies of display, which lend to these notions of in-shop curation. This work thoughtfully considers the display of commodities and variously explores the economic rationale for display strategies as well as meaning made through the organisation of objects. The history of retail display is neatly summed up by Wrigley and Lowe (2002). They explain that the inter-war period saw the rise of retail display specialists (Wrigley & Lowe 2002: 214). At this time, the orderly organisation of commodities in new consumption spaces heralded a modern mode of browsing and consuming in the shop. Despite these origins, the art and science of display solidified in the image-conscious 1980s, when design became an essential part of all retail culture (Wrigley & Lowe 2002). At this time, design and display strategies were used strategically to encapsulate the identity of the shop and deliver an image to a targeted consumer (Wrigley & Lowe 2002, citing Nixon 1996). The organisation of objects contributes to shop identities, brings out objects' qualities (Holloway & Hones 2007), and ultimate helps them sell, or not.

For Louise Crewe (2003: 356) the organisation of a shop constitutes a "narrative production" in a continual state of becoming, where the shopkeeper plays "the role of author and storyteller." As an example, Kim (1999) offers a nuanced reading of how shopkeepers in Los Angeles' Chinatown selectively curate versions of Chinese and Chinese-American culture through the organisation and display of objects. Not unlike successive waves of staff in a museum, she shows how the styles of organisation shift as shops are passed down through generations. Kim (1999) considers the arrangement of objects in shops a topographical practice. She suggests

> that though the art and curio stores are public, commercial sites, the arrangement of their material culture involves the same type of reflection that animates their consideration and assemblage of personal collections and souvenirs in domestic realms (Kim 1999: 137).

At another scale, Degen and her colleagues (2008) think about the retail space of Milton Keynes Mall as an urban design project. They focus on the meanings of the materiality and visuality of the mall as an example of the "complexity and the banality of contemporary urban experiences" (Degen et al. 2008: 1917). Though the perception of shops is not my focus here, I discuss these relationships – between urban and retail design – in Chapter Four. In addition, their work also summons the affective experience of place, which leads to my next discussion.


TELEPHONE
HISTORIC LONDON
DON
DON

ot Parliament- London
LONDON
BUCKINGH
CE-LONDON


WELLY
LONDON TAXI
BEST OF BRITISH
LONDON BUS & TAXI
LONDON


TOWER BRIDGE
LONDON
LONDON
LONDON
OTB


LONDON
London 2012
Playing Cards
Manufactured under license by Winning Moves UK Ltd.
7 Praed Street, London W2 1NJ.
Made in UK.
Historical LONDON


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Affective materialism

Around the turn of the last century, geographers made various calls to refocus human geography on the world of materials (Jackson 2000; Lees 2002; Philo 2000): to bring attention back to "the more 'thing-y,' bump-into-able, stubbornly there-in-the-world kinds of 'matter' (the material) with which earlier geographers tended to be more familiar" (Philo 2000: 33). This is part of the ebbs and flows of theoretical fashion. As Pels and colleagues (2002: 1) assert:

> After poststructuralism and constructivism had melted everything that was solid into air, it was perhaps time that we noticed once again the sensuous immediacy of the objects we live, work and converse with, in which we routinely place our trust, which we love and hate, which binds us as much as we bind them.

These calls were interpreted in a variety of ways. I address their refutations a bit later, but first, for many geographers, it stimulated new materialisms and a closer look at both the fleshy and expressive world of matter. This attention to matter and its affect is my focus here.

Authors, like anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007), argue for close attention to the physical properties of materials and how they interact with the body. Ingold rallies against the neglect of matter for more conventional focus on the materiality of objects. For Ingold, the properties of things are essential parts of the generation and regeneration of the world. Like the objects they constitute, material substance also has a social life (see also Shove et al. 2007). The liveliness of matter exceeds its subject and may outlive it too (Anderson & Wylie 2009; Ingold 2007). Though it is not ancillary to them, the matter of things informs the forms they take, shaping what is possible. "Stripped of the veneer of materiality, [all organisms] are revealed not as quiescent objects but as hives of activity, pulsing with the flows of materials that keep them alive" (Ingold 2007: 7). For Ingold, then, these materials are vibrant – alive with their own material histories. Ingold (2010c: 95) writes that things are "possessed by the action," but does not contend they have agency in themselves.

For other authors, material is agentic. Through the thesis, my approach to matter is indebted to the material philosophies and political theories of Jane Bennett. Bennett (2010) shares Ingold's concern with the power of materials – similarly rejecting notions that materials are inert and determined – but also focuses on what things can do through their agency. She describes "thing power" as an ability "to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (Bennett 2010: 6). As actants, things are independent from our accounts, understandings, and the meanings we make of them as humans. As a posthumanist, Bennett's material ethics challenge conventional hierarchies between human and non-humans, flattening these relations (see also Whatmore 2002). Her notions of vitality work across and through human and non-human bodies. Accordingly, as humans we are material too and generate a thing-power in our bodily assemblages.

Bennett's vital materialism has been embraced by geographers. The theories of practice – drawn out in Chapter Three – have a heightened appreciation for material that chimes with Bennett's concern for vibrant matter (Pels et al. 2002). Non-representational theory (NRT), in particular, asks questions about matter's complexity and "how qualities of liveliness are internal to, rather than in supplement or opposition to, the taking place of matter and materiality" (Anderson & Wylie 2009: 319). Within NRT and beyond, many geographers addressed calls to rematerialise geography with a focus on what matter can do as opposed to what its essence may be (Anderson & Tolia-Kelly 2004).

Highlighting the vitality of non-humans, and seeing agency as distributed, engenders a relational politics. For Bennett (2010), seeing the world as a web of affective forces may lead to more responsible and ecologically minded ways of engaging. Reflecting on her work, Anderson and Wylie (2009: 329) write:

> To posit the energy of these things is neither an animism nor an environmental determinism. This is because such positing is predicated firstly upon a move beyond any ontological distinction between organic and nonorganic, and secondly upon a recognition that sensibility arises via relations – processual and reversible relations – between sensing and sensed. To sense is always to "sense with".

The power of materials lies not only in its vibrant matter, but the affects of which they are part. Matter makes us feel. It grabs us. We are "seduced by the sense of an incipient vitality lodged in things" (Stewart 2007: 41). Thrift (2004: 64) discusses affect as "a sense of push in the world" that causes some sort of action, thought, or feeling (see also Lorimer 2008a). Stewart (2007: 29) describes affect as more a pull than a push. For her, ordinary affects are "public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of" (Stewart 2007: 2). Affect does not act alone, but concerns the relations between things (Dewsbury et al. 2002). It is "a tangle of possible connections" (Stewart 2007: 4). This intensity of relations hits us before thought and emotion (Latham & McCormack 2004: 706). As such, though it is powerful, visceral, and felt, it is yet to accrue meaning.

Notions of affect and vital materialism are interwoven. Bennett draws out these connections in her book *The enchantment of modern life*. In it, Bennett (2001: 5) describes enchantment as:

> to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and everyday […] a state of wonder […] a momentarily immobilizing encounter; it is to be transfixed, spellbound.

At once it may also involve the uncanny feeling of "being disrupted or torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition" (Bennett 2001: 5). In either case, enchantment is about heightened sensory encounter with the material and immaterial world that produces affects and emotions; for Woodyer and Geoghean (2012: 196) it is "a force through which the world inspires affective attachment." Though they are not necessarily enrolled in the same project, geographers interested in enchantment share something with posthuman materialists. In particular, many see the body engaging not only with the "bump-into-able, stubbornly there-in-the-world kinds of 'matter'" but also the material imagination, working "through livelier, agental, powers of interrogation, provocation, and estrangement" (Anderson & Wylie 2009: 323). In moments of enchantment, a "mood of fullness, plenitude or liveliness" is felt through the body in relation with its environment, stimulating a generosity to the environment (Bennett 2001: 5). At these moments, the body is tuned into the world. Bennett (2001: 5) describes it as:

> a sense of having one's nerves or circulation or concentration powers turned up or recharged […] You notice new colours, discern details previously ignored, hear extraordinary sounds as familiar landscapes of sense sharpen and intensify.

There are long disciplinary traditions of enchantment in geography (see Woodyer & Geoghegan 2012). There are also long-standing interests in texture, emotions, and feeling of places (see Lorimer 2008a; Thien 2005). These registers are part of the everyday embodied ways we make, remake, and make sense of the city – and by extension, its shops. The feelings and textures of affect implicate immaterial qualities too. As Anderson and Wylie (2009: 332) remind us, "qualities usually associated with immateriality, figurative or affective effects, are of matter, rather than standing in opposition to it." Thus there may not have been a need to rematerialise geography at all.

> Indeed, the promise of the turn to a renewed questioning of matter is in the development of concepts that attune to the openness of matter and therefore refuse to speak of matter as an undifferentiated externality standing apart from the social or cultural. (Anderson & Tolia-Kelly 2004:672)

For authors like Latham and McCormack (2004: 703), immaterial processes, practices, and affects bring matter into being and give material its expressive life (see also Anderson & Harrison 2010). The opposite is also true, in that "materialities/mobilities are the very sparks which ignite passages of perception and sensation, and concordances or dissonances, of bodies and things" (Anderson & Wylie 2009: 326). The expressiveness of matter includes its feeling, style, movement, and atmosphere, each of which may exert force on the world.

The design and configuration of space engenders particular affects which shape its use and potentialities. As Kraftl and Adey (2008: 227) argue, buildings are not just blank stages for activity, but "[supply] the perceptive body with a set of possible actions or movements to perform." Louise Crewe (2003: 355, citing Gregson et al. 2002b and Williams et al. 2001) writes of sentient markets, describing consumption as:

> an emotionally charged process, a sensory

> experience, in which certain types of products, places and shops are imbued with desire or disgust, love or loathing […] and where the thermal, acoustic, luminary and olfactory qualities of the space are fully recognized.

This resonates with how Bennett (2001: 114) approaches spaces of consumption:

> The phenomenology of consumption that I pursue focuses on the sense of vitality, the charged-up feeling often generated in human bodies by the presence or promise of commodity consumption; I see similarities between that affective state and the "moral sentiments" that, in the history of European thought, have been associated with the beauty or sublimity of nature.

Shops are not only imbued with affective potential, but affectively engineered. Retail environments endeavour to craft particular atmospheres, which may evoke powerful feelings (Goss 1993, 1999; J.C. Miller 2014a, 2014b). This engineering of affect has been detailed in geography, for example, by Thrift (2008), who writes about the affective engineering of Prada's New York store designed by Rem Koolhaas. The shop materialises – and commercialises – glamour and engages and delights through the senses through tactile surfaces and theatricality. Earlier, I mentioned J.C. Miller's (2014a, 2014b) ethnography of a mall in Argentina. In that work, he considers how the mall endeavours to work through the consumers' affective experience, and how consumer practices emerge through material assemblages and embodied "representational registers of ideology, discourse, and identity" (J.C. Miller 2014: 48). He describes the mall as a biopolitical technology of affect, while also describing the politics of affect in the mall. Here, classed, gendered, and raced bodies feel the mall's affects differently (J.C. Miller 2014a). Finally, in his consideration of machinic assemblages in IKEA, Roberts (2012) too, highlights the importance of material engineering in engendering the affective capacities of non-human environments.

Brands and branding also play a significant role in the affective capacity of retail environments. The brand's efforts to engineer affect are considered more squarely in Chapter Six. Briefly, brands are dynamic entities – processes and projections that craft and contribute to everyday ambiences (Arvidsson 2006; Lash & Lury 2007; Lury 2004). They can be immersive and are part of the everyday textures of our urban experience (Klingmann 2007). Brands are not merely projected from above, but have been discussed as animate social objects, completed by the creativity of consumers, or indeed, the shopkeepers (Arvidsson 2006; Lury 2004). Like the shop (J.C Miller 2014b), the affective potential of the brand is complex and beyond the control of any one entity. The politics of co-production are drawn out in Chapter Six.

My project too draws out the affective potential of spaces of consumption. It sees both the brands and the matter in ad hoc shops as vibrant – with textures, history, and power. These micro-geographies relate to both the physical materials of objects and also to immaterial practices and events – emotions, affects, feeling, atmospheres – that animate the material world.

The assemblage

An ad hoc shop can be seen as an assemblage of parts itself, and also part of the assemblage of the city. Though there are multiple approaches to assemblage (see Anderson & McFarlane 2011), I draw particularly on DeLanda's (2006) theory to help understand the complex relations working though the shops and to illuminate material interactions across scales. Put simply, an assemblage is a whole composed of discrete and interconnected parts, which can be traced down to a micro scale. For Bennett (2010: 23-24), "assemblages are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, or vibrant materials of all sorts." Assemblage also suggests the "practices of gathering, composition, alignment and reuse" (McFarlane 2011: 649). More than the term network, assemblage evokes depth, potential, historical processes, practice, and structures of unequal relations.

The assemblage recognises the shifting agency and relationships of parts and the whole. Each component may play material and expressive roles in relation to each other (DeLanda 2006: 12). These parts are not predefined, but understood through the assemblages they join (McFarlane 2011: 653). The whole, in turn, shapes what is possible for the parts, providing them with constraints and resources (DeLanda 2006: 34-

35). Despite its coming together, each maintains its independence.

> The autonomy of the wholes relative to their parts is guaranteed by the fact that they can causally affect those parts in both a limiting and an enabling way, and by the fact that they can interact with each other in a way not reducible to their parts, that is, in such a way that an explanation of the interaction that includes the details of the component parts would be redundant. (DeLanda 2006: 40)

Bennett (2010: 4) likens assemblages to Russian matryoshka dolls; each "contain[s] a sequence of ever smaller ones – functioning groupings of actants in a series of large, more complex congregations." Though this analogy may overly simplify complex relations (DeLanda 2006: 33), it aptly expresses the multiplicity of scales, and keeps us from the trap of creating a micro/macro duality. As DeLanda (2006) reminds us, each part is only relative to others in an assemblage, which has a multitude of scales.

Each component may work to homogenise (territorialise) or destabilise (deterritorialise) the whole (DeLanda 2006: 12). Though territorialising processes increase the homogeneity of the assemblage and "produce the identity of assemblages at each spatial scale" (DeLanda 2006: 39), the assemblage remains heterogeneous, with parts that "do not form a seamless whole" (DeLanda 2006: 4). For Bennett (2010: 24), "[p]recisely because each member-actant maintains an energetic pulse slightly 'off' from that of the assemblage, an assemblage is never a stolid block but an open-ended collective." Each part maintains its relation to the world outside the assemblage and may be detached from one assemblage to form part of another (DeLanda 2006: 18). In Bennett's (2007: 5) view, the liveliness of matter ensures that things in an assemblage are never reducible to the contexts in which they are placed by human subjects.

The complexity of the assemblage is amplified by this liveliness of material and its affective potentialities. For materialists like Bennett, the agency of an assemblage is a result of the vitality of its materials. She writes that:

> Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces. A lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonomous but as vital materialities." (Bennett 2010: 21).

Agency emerges from, and is distributed within, human/non-human interactions (Shove et al. 2007: 7, drawing from Latour 1993, see also Anderson & Tolia-Kelly, 2004). As an important part of everyday place and practice, the non-human world is a significant part of the assemblage. However, this does not mean that all parts of an assemblage exert the same force. Within assemblages, objects and devices exert power at all scales at different intensities (Bennett 2010). In this way, the assemblage signals "power as plurality in transformation" (Anderson & McFarlane 2011). This plurality is important in how I engage with notions of assemblage. As noted in the early pages of this chapter, I endeavour to connect the affective with the political in this work. The notion of assemblage has been helpful to achieve this – to connect the meaningful organisation of things and the micro-geographies of the shops to different stories through a number of scales. The political stories that connect to the shops via these assemblages are important to the shop and its keepers. Furthermore, as discussed in the final section, they expand the audience for this work to those looking at creativity across different disciplines.


Duralon
Basic Needs
Duralon
Puncture Repair Kit
Bloo
Acticlean
NEW formula
FRESH blue water
Super CLEANING agents
This Block FREE
SUPER FOAMING
PUNCTURE OUTFIT
PRICE
Value

Assembling the ad hoc & its politics

Currently, improvisation and creativity are at the centre of much popular and scholarly attention. In this final section, I outline how my interests resonate with other research on the improvisatory and suggest popular attraction to the ad hoc too. I conclude by asking how the ad hoc shops might fit into this ad hoc celebration. But first, I begin by presenting the work of Jencks and Silver.

As outlined in Chapter One, in 2013, Jencks and Silver's *Adhocism: A case for improvisation* was updated and republished for the first time since 1972. Its rerelease is a testament to the return of the ad hoc as an impulse working through contemporary thought and feeling. The book is a design manifesto, presented as a response to the totalising forces of modernism. As such, it positions adhocism against persuasive social and cultural forces that homogenise, pre-meditate, and design life from the top down. The foreword to the new edition maintains that universalising forces and conservative tastes are still strong; the forces of the brand, nation-state, international organisations, and mass culture continue to work towards standardising and universal aesthetics.

In response, Jencks and Silver renew their celebration of consumer creativity and ingenuity, our ability to challenge the status quo and empower ourselves by making things personal and hybrid. Adhocism, they contend, is all around us: in architecture, social movements, technology, fashion, science, and even in nature – the platypus is presented as the prime example. It can be elite or populist, intentionally ad hoc or practically so. Three principles bring this diverse production together. 1. It uses "an available system in a new way to solve a problem quickly and effectively" (Jencks & Silver 2013: vii); 2. It is legible, in that its parts "show what they do, where they come from in the past, and how they are put together" (ibid.); and 3. It involves creativity.

Adhocism is purposeful. It "reveals the desire for immediate and purposeful action which permeates everyday life" (Jencks & Silver 2013: 16). Unlike conventional uses of the term ad hoc – which may equate it with haphazard – adhocism here is not random or accidental. Though purposeful, it remains loose and open, which permits possibilities. It is "the informal course taken within a stricter system" (Jencks & Silver 2013: 110).

For these authors, all creations start ad hoc. Not unlike Lefebvre's moments, described above, Jencks and Silver talk about moments of invention – "the eureka flash" (Jencks & Silver 2013: viii) of the ad hoc breakthrough, where new things are possible. From that moment, things become improved and conventional, losing their ad hoc-ness. In moments of ad hoc creation, objects show their possibilities through juxtaposition with others. They have potential; "everything can always be something else" (Jencks & Silver 2013: 27). Materials are important to adhocism. Jencks and Silver acknowledge that no creative production is formed tabula rasa, but relies on the resources at hand and histories of making. Echoing Miller's thoughts on the humility of objects, they write:

> Adhocism rarely presents anything new in the sense of a discovery. Since the purpose is to help solve a problem, or to change contexts and make it a non-problem, adhocism need not call attention to itself. However, while novelty may be absent in the form of new or original products, it is characteristic in improvised methods. (Jencks & Silver 2013: 115)

There is a relationship between material and time here, which is useful too. The adhocist would rather undertake her job immediately with the resources available than wait for the right tools or resources to come along. As a result, things are done the best they can be under the circumstances, but do not aim for perfection. Luckily, for Jencks and Silver (2013: xix), "there is tolerance, even love, of mongrel beauty."

As architects, Jencks and Silver spend time reflecting on the relationships of the ad hoc to urban space. Generally, in the built environment, they champion diversity and choice, which they see diminished in large scale planning redevelopments. Ad hoc urban processes ideally mean that cities build on themselves using their wealth of historical material resources to hand and change incrementally in more democratic ways.

Cities have always been sites of ad hoc processes and events. As mentioned, in both popular culture and academic research, there is currently a revived celebration for the improvisatory, ad hoc, impromptu, and temporary. Because my thesis contributes to some of these currents, I touch on them here. The threads that run through this work highlight human creativity, and the capacities of the material with which it engages. As a way to bookend the chapter, it also returns to ideas set out earlier on the everyday experience in the city, its possibilities, and politics.

In the city, various DIY urbanisms aim to rework the built environment and our understanding of it, while asking after the democratisation of public space and the right to the city (Iveson 2013). Creative interventions like guerilla gardening, yarn-bombing, skateboarding, cycling, parkour, and flash-mobbing explore the possibilities of space and rework its material surfaces (Borden 2001; Mould 2009; Saville 2008). Though playful, urban interventions may challenge the experience, material, and aesthetics of cities and its urban norms (Pinder 2005a). For Pinder (2008: 734),

> critical urban interventions and spatial practices are based on the refusal to accept current conditions as inevitable and natural. Through imaginative means, they explore possibilities and enter the register of as if: "as if I were another, as if things could be otherwise."

Leaving space open for non-instrumental uses permits this sort of reimagining, everyday improvisation, and play (Stevens 2007; Woodyer 2012). Though it may hold a promise to reconfigure the city, some urban interventions – like tactical urbanism, for example – may also be officially coopted, becoming political vernaculars (Mould 2014).

Notions of improvisation are also evolving through an emerging body of geography concerning practices of craft, making, DIY, and mending (Bond et al. 2013; DeSilvey et al. 2014; Paton 2013; Thomas et al. 2013; Warren & Gibson 2014). As well as innovation, creativity, and conviviality, this work raises issues of sustainability and the politics of consumption. Beyond geography too, authors are enquiring about the skills and creativity of craftspeople, and how people engage with material through these practices (Adamson 2007; Sennett 2008; Crawford 2009; Gauntlett 2011; Ingold 2013; Warren & Gibson 2014, Thurnell-Read 2014).

Within creative economy research too, the improvisatory is making an appearance. In particular, a collection entitled *Spaces of vernacular creativity* edited by Tim Edensor and his colleagues (2010), highlights the more everyday registers and spaces at which creativity occurs. This work challenges conventional discourses of the creative economy, which see creativity and entrepreneurialism as key drivers of economic development in post-industrial cities (Florida 2002; Landry 2000; McCann 2013). Agendas driving "creative cities" have been criticised for privileging elites at the expense of those who are more marginalised (Peck 2005; Rantisi et al. 2006; Sager 2011; Shearmur 2007) and venerating the economic benefits of art and culture over others (Bayliss 2007; Mommaas 2004). By contrast, Edensor and his colleagues recognise broader notions of creative practice that may at times be marginal and non-economic. As this thesis describes – particularly Chapter Five – through their commercial activities, shopkeepers are creative in informal ways.

Finally, a body of research on the Global South engages with ad hoc-ness and improvisation. This includes work on the resourcefulness and survival strategies of bricoleurs who join in informal economies through creative – and often dubious – practices including hustle and jugaad (see Jauregui 2013; Jeffrey & Young 2014; Jones 2010).

The current interest in the ad hoc extends well beyond the academy. It represents not only new modes of survival and entertainment, but also official policy; these modes of ad hoc urbanism are embraced in popular culture and by governments. For example, jugaad had been embraced as a neoliberal development strategy by the Indian state (Jeffrey & Young 2014) and tactical urbanism has been adopted by urban governments as part of a creative city strategy (Mould 2014). Within a retail context, Waitrose and the pasta sauce producer Sacla recently used in-store flash-mobbing to stage a "rousing rendition" of Funiculì Funiculà and generate social media buzz (see http://www.sacla.co.uk/shopera). At the retail policy level, recent reports on high street revitalisation issued by Mary Portas (2011) and the Department of Community and Local Government (DCLG 2012b) formally support pop-up shops and meanwhile spaces "as exploratory ways of allowing new cultural and retail resources to emerge on high streets across the UK" (Hall 2013: 12). It is worth critically assessing, then, how some of these sensibilities have materialised – the pop-ups, the tactical urbanism, the flash mobs – and how and why particular forms of ad hoc-ness are celebrated at the exclusion of others. As highlighted in Chapters Four and Five, this sort of ad hoc-ness is happening in other forms threatened by the contemporary cultural economy. The ad hoc shops highlighted through this thesis curate a particular kind of urbanism that is generally not celebrated. Instead they are spaces under pressure.

The widespread embrace of the ad hoc engenders a politics that complicates the adhocism of Jencks and Silver to some degree. The ad hoc does not always represent a subversive tactic nor is it always celebratory. Indeed, as I show through the thesis, beyond this consciously playful improvisation, the brand and city also work in ad hoc ways that are practical and mundane. Throughout the thesis, and especially in Chapter Seven, I also show how the ad hoc practices of the shop are not necessarily joyful creative acts, but emerge from economic necessity. They are often about just getting by. In this way, my celebration of the ad hoc is slightly more cautious than that of Jencks and Silver.

Conclusions: Everyday impulses

In this chapter, I situate the project within literature on the everyday, retail geographies, and shops, before presenting its core intellectual impulses. I outline my material concerns, which include thinking through curation as a material geographical practice, considering matter as affective and vibrant, and using notions of material assemblages to draw these material concerns together. I detail the adhocism of Jencks and Silver and also outline popular and scholarly interest in improvisation. Finally, I briefly consider the enthusiasm for various modes of ad hoc-ness in relation to the enthusiasm for ad hoc shops, foreshadowing the politics of material difference and affective atmospheres that simmer through the thesis.

Though the chapter covered considerable ground, it is tied together in its attention to the importance of the everyday: its affects and politics, materials, feeling, and human creativity. At the outset I argue that the everyday is a place of potential, where the mundane routines of life may create openings into larger forces. This is important for the arguments I make in the empirical chapters to come, particularly in relation to the politics of difference and domestication through creative practice. This relates too to the opening I define in the literature. To reiterate, in this thesis I pay close attention to everyday material while opening up the politics of place and difference. In the central section of the chapter I home in on the importance of everyday matter. I make the case for shopkeeping as a material geographical practice of everyday curation and relate it to other popular practices of curating. Positioning it as meaningful and creative bestows it with an authority which I carry thoughout the thesis. The second part of my material interests concern not the organisation of materials, but attends more closely to the materials themselves. By arguing that matter is vibrant, I set the stage for an investigation of the shops' agency, necessary in order to speak to themes on affective atmosphere and the spontaneity of matter. In a final treatment of material, I suggest that the assemblage is helpful both as a way to see the shops and connect their everyday material with the politics of the city.

The final section of this chapter outlines various interests in the ad hoc and improvisatory, beginning with the adhocism of Jencks and Silver. I draw from these notions of ad hoc through my project. In particular, the everyday creativity they highlight – the ability to make sameness different – is a theme that works through this thesis. The importance they place on the visuality and vitality of ad hoc-ness are also key; I describe the ad hoc as an obvious amalgam of dynamic materials. The purposefulness of their adhocism is a point a return to as well; the ad hoc is not necessarily slap dash, but can be measured, loose, and open. Finally, the immediacy that Jencks and Silver describe is important. The ad hoc is not perfect – it doesn't try to be – but it is the best possible given the time constraints and the materials at hand. Though I do not make it explicit, the material arguments and theories presented in the central section of this chapter reverberate through discussions of ad hoc as well. The heterogeneity of DeLanda's assemblage and the vibrancy of Bennett's thing power are at home in a world of adhocism, which is presented as visibly made up and alive with material potential. These associations begin to suggest how the material impulses work through the thesis in relation to the ad hoc.

After the discussion of adhocism, I turn to other modes of everyday creativity, from urban interventions, to craft, to the vernacular creativities of the cultural economy, to the improvisations of bricoleurs in the Global South. I suggest there is a politics to this scholarly fascination and popular uptake of the improvisatory. Foreshadowing themes to come, I suggest that the relationship of the shops to the world that surrounds them might not fit neatly into conventional dichotomies that work through the literature on adhocism or improvisation, and through some notions of the everyday. As a result, I end by suggesting a tempered celebration for the ad hoc-ness of the shops. This segues to Chapter Three, which outlines how I approached my work in the shops and, indeed, how they approached me.

3

Approach

Heterogeneous and open: my approach reflects the qualities of the ad hoc shop. Here, difference abounds, but the marginalised aesthetic of the shop and the social diversity of their shopkeepers are navigated through a reflexive approach and by tuning into practice. As places where bodies are at work, practice is central here – both pragmatically and theoretically. Multiple theories of practice offer themselves and are sampled to support reflection on the shops' labours, affect, politics, and materials. My practice of research is similarly mixed. Walking, interviews, historical research, and blogging enhance in-depth ethnographies behind the till and with a camera in hand. "Opening up" over "pinning down," the style of the thesis is part of its substance and argument. This experiment in visual storytelling presents an ad hoc assemblage of material. The curated montage of visual and textual narratives acknowledges the shops' material and political complexities, and hopes to draw out their multiple stories.

Entering the shop

Entering the shop brings together bodies, biographies, expectations, and materials. Because ethnographic approaches to research use the self as the primary instrument of knowing (Clifford & Marcus 1986), reflexivity is fundamental in their practice. Perspectives of feminist and postcolonial geographers, which emerged in the 1990s, critically interrogate geographers' roles as intellectuals, their positionality and power (Butler 1999; Katz 1992; McDowell 1992). Rose (1997: 305) puts it plainly, writing that "knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and that those circumstances shape it in some way.'' In her enormously influential book *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) describes identities as unstable, relational, and emergent through performances of the self. Our selves as researchers shape our practices and outcomes; there is always a constitutive, complex, and incomplete relationship between the "researcher, researched and research" (Rose 1997: 316). Here, I outline my investments in, and relations to, this project. In this chapter I elaborate on how this played out in relation to the investments of my research participants as well.

Throughout this project, my participants and I navigated our differences, shared our histories, and pondered our motivations. Through the ethnography, my self – female, white, middle-class, agnostic, Canadian, and pregnant (for a time) – shaped these relationships. These characteristics were points of contrast between me and the majority of my participants. As discussed below, sometimes this mattered, other times, it did not. My experience as an academic and my history as a professional urban designer also shaped my approach and my participants' expectations of me.

Though it risks seeming self-interested, it is also worth discussing how my background influenced the development of the project, its execution, and how I was met by my participants. My training as a designer and urban planner and my work as an assistant in creative industry research is particularly relevant. My presence in London as a Canadian doctoral student also shaped my approach to this project and consequently how it was received.

I studied Design Art as an undergraduate before earning a Master's of Science in Planning. Being trained in design and applied arts, and in urban planning and urban design, I am well-schooled in creating culture from the top down. This part of my background was particularly "useful" to some shopkeepers. For example, I met Mo when he was grappling with Transport for London-led urban design plans that were threatening to move his kiosk. We worked together to draft letters to assert his rights to a place in the redeveloped parcel. It felt good to use my skills to help in this way. Whereas I appreciate intelligent and beautiful design, I am bothered by design-centric planning that privileges what places look like over what they do or mean. My interests in undesigned spaces and things – like Mo's kiosk – and their less wilful production, may fly in the

face of my training and experience working as an urban designer. As outlined in Chapter One, I am interested in how places emerge not only through official interventions, but through the daily decisions of people and the stuff they surround themselves with. The everydayness of shopkeeping and forces that work towards spatial metanarratives can trouble each other. And yet, the demarcation between everyday tactics and official strategies are not dichotomous. This relationship is something I set out to explore with the shopkeepers.

This work also brings with it my background as an assistant on creative economy research projects, spanning eight years in Montreal and Toronto. This work both aligned with, and interrogated, creative city positioning as outlined in the last chapter. Though it was often critical of the blind adoption of these policies by city governments, it was predominantly focused on "high culture": interior design, circus arts, fine art, and fashion. By contrast – and again, perhaps in response to this previous experience – this project is concerned with creativity happening in an alternative realm: creative practice divorced from conscious practices of comprehensive image-making. Though this creativity is commonplace, I approached it in the same way as high culture forms, much to the amusement of some shopkeepers and the pride of others. As elaborated later in this chapter, shops are not always treated in this way. And as discussed further in Chapters Four and Five, the shops' creative production is not approached in the same way as other sorts of design. Ad hoc shops are not sexy. Yet their materiality is essential to the feeling and experience of the city. As such, exploring vernacular creativity was important to this project (see Edensor et al. 2010). The ways in which these interests and my biography overlapped with the forces in the shop, the experiences of shopkeepers, and the vibrancy of local material, provided the multiple points of departure for this project.

We meet at the stall, and, as usual, head to a café for tea and to work on the next letter for TfL. Ordinarily we find a Formica table in a cosy corner of the café next door. Mo offers another option today. "It's a great place. Called 114. It's for white people, like you" he says with a chuckle. "What's that supposed to mean"? I ask, my pale skin reddening from embarrassment. "For people who are, you know, into the books, intellectuals, like you." 114 is a hip establishment. We sit across a table fashioned of repurposed wood, me with my lemongrass infusion, Mo with his milky English tea. An artisan light bulbs dangles over us. "You're an angel sent from heaven to help me," he says, and not for the first time. Inside I squirm a bit under his weighty expectations. "Let's get down to the letter," I suggest.

— Field notes, 14 July 2012

After I arrive at the kiosk, Daleel pulls out this morning's Metro newspaper. He has marked a certain page… "Can you believe this?" he asks. In an article on the liveability of international cities, his hometown of Dhaka is rated #5 worst. Toronto and Vancouver (and Calgary, for that matter) are all in the top 5.

— Field notes, 15 August 2012

I sit behind the cash register and greet people when they arrive at the kiosk. Still, the majority of customers offer their payment to Daleel, often after a confused double-take. Sometimes Daleel takes the money and passes it to me. Other times he exclaims "she's in charge" or "she's the boss" and laughs. His laughter does nothing to dispel their bewilderment. Perhaps it is a construct of my slight discomfort in the kiosk environment, but I feel that people don't expect to see me there. Do I seem uncomfortable? Am I too groomed or female or white? I guess I am somewhat surprised to see myself here too. People stare as they walk by. I smile at them. They blush. Once, a Canadian woman came by the kiosk for gum. We chatted for a short time about both studying here in London – what subjects, how long we've been here… I didn't out myself as a researcher in the field or go into the details of my research. Did I read confusion on her face… "A Canadian student working in a kiosk?! Surely not for money, what with her weekly twenty hour employment maximum!"

— Field notes, 16 August 2012

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COLD DRINKS
ICE COLD DRINKS
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The Daily Telegraph
The Sunday Telegraph
GRAYS INN TRADERS
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174
CHURSTON MANSIONS
1 to 12
THE EUROPEAN
VANITY FAIR
INTERIORS
PRIVATE EYE
GOTCHA!


WANEY'S FOOD STORE
23
Loot
loot.com
ICE CREAM TIME
oyster Buy or top up your Oyster here.
Love ice cream
Been missing out on your dreams?
Play here
Lycamobile
www.lycamobile.co.uk
Humps

Negotiating difference

Ad hoc shops are fringe commercial activity in a number of ways. The shops' difference could both describe the genre of retail, compared to mainstream chain stores, and the backgrounds of the shopkeepers, in relation to those who typically tick "White British" on government forms. In either case, this difference breeds a potential for "othering." Here, I outline how I approached this issue through the course of research and, indeed, how it approached me.

Commercial & aesthetic difference

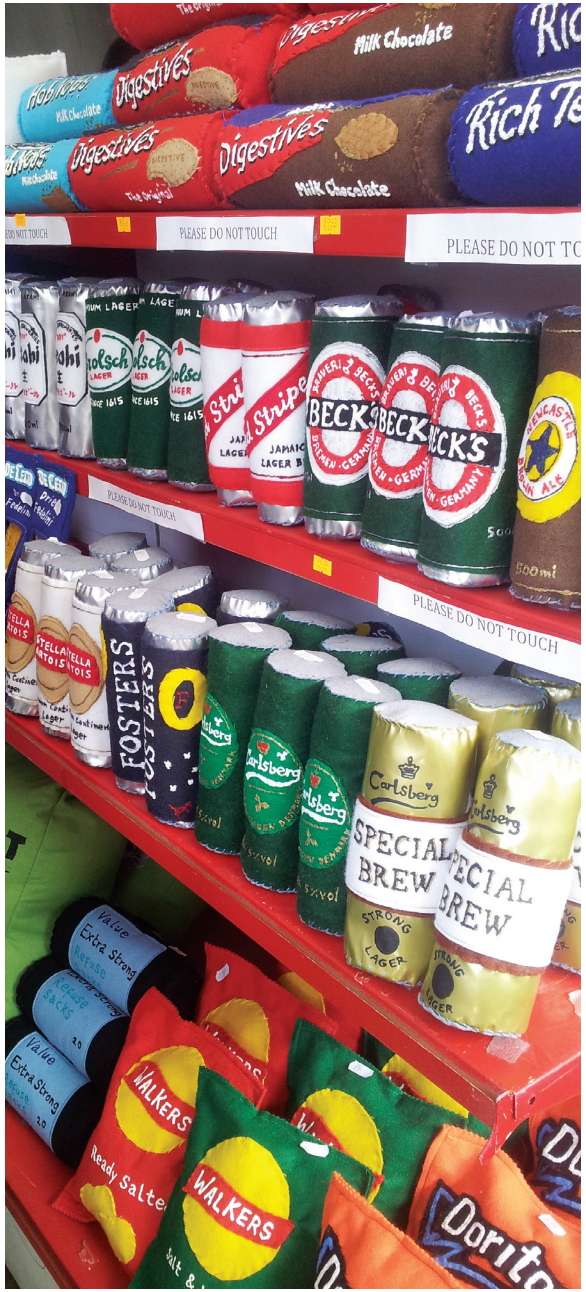
Ad hoc shops often lack the slickness and polish typically identified as desirable in other retail environments. In these shops, the volume of goods, the tangle of displays, and the lack of speciality may contribute to a sense of humanity, but also of disorder. Economically, these shops also occupy a place on the margins. For example, while independents account for 77% of all convenience stores in the UK, they generate only 17.4% of total convenience store sales (Association of Convenience Stores 2014). Other times, ad hoc shops may seem so familiar and mundane that they disappear in the urban landscape. Consequently, despite their central roles in the lives of many locals and tourists, on account of their aesthetic presentation, low economic positioning, and everydayness, ad hoc shops are considered, by some, to occupy the lower rungs of the retail hierarchy – looked down upon as places of "tilling and filling" (RetailWeek 2014).

While ad hoc shops may be alternately derided for their unruly aesthetics or treated as part of the urban wallpaper, they may also be celebrated. Images on the following pages of the corner shop Lucy Sparrow caringly made of felt show enormous artistic enthusiasm for these everyday spaces. Photographer and artist Son Emirali also uses shops as a focus in his practice. In one project, shown on page 110, he lovingly documented Fosters, his local newsagent with transcripts of everyday conversations, photographs, and a visual catalogue of every item inside. As another example, the Victoria & Albert Museum recently republished "High Street," a classic introduction to shops on the British high street, featuring Eric Ravilious' delightful illustrations and J.M. Richards' engaging text. First published in 1938, the republication signals a popular fascination and contemporary nostalgia for everyday shops.

For some, then, these shops are captivating. The materiality of everyday shops evokes possibilities, a chance of encountering the unexpected, and a diversity of objects and people. They evoke a spontaneity not found in shopping malls, chain stores, or other groomed retail spaces. But here runs the risk of treating them as more authentic or exotic. Reflecting on her research on car boot sales, Louise Crewe (2000: 284) writes that:

> these "everyday spaces." seemingly so ordinary and for so long overlooked, are in many ways otherworldly and transgressive.


DRUMSTICK
Free sweets with every purchase Just ask!
LOVE HEARTS
IT IS ILLEGAL
THE AGE OF 18
FOAM SHRIMPS
COLA BOTTLES
Juicy Fruit
Hubba Bubba
Orbit
Extra
Extra ICE
Supporting local health causes
Airwaves
PROPERTY OF: The Cornershop
NEXT CUSTOMER PLEASE
CASH ONLY
play here!
Knitted CATS Trust
give generously
The Cornershop
Galaxy
Minstrels
Maltesers
Milky Way
Boost
Dairy Milk
Revels
Starburst
KitKat
Bournville
Fruit Gums
Fruit Pastilles
PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH
No food or drink in the Shop
NO UNACCOMPANIED SCHOOL CHILDREN



> Having felt "at home" for so long in the spaces of the mall and the flagship designer fashion store, my tentative early forays into the space of the car-boot sale, with all the noise, dirt and hidden languages and codes, were indeed trips into another world, a world which is every bit as exotic and spectacular as the grand spaces of formal retailing with their now well rehearsed and predictable product mixes and store designs.

While ad hoc shops were familiar, they also felt otherworldly for me during my course of fieldwork. Whereas I am keen to celebrate these spaces, I do so tentatively.

Though consumers' perception of these shops is not the focus on my research, the shops' perceived difference is worth considering as it impacts their fate in processes of urban development (as discussed in Chapters Four and Seven). It also shapes the way I chose, and chose not, to approach them. In his reflections on a North London street, Miller (2005: n.p.) criticised romantic and patronising middle-class perceptions of corner shops, finding them

> strongly influenced by a conviction that corner shops should represent particular values or idealisations of the street itself. For them the soap opera representation of shops and streets have become a normative aesthetic, how things are supposed to be.

In the popular imagination, ad hoc shops are also embraced, at times, by a cult of irony which celebrates the vernacular and kitsch cultures. For example, books like *Shop horror: The best of the worst in British shop names* (Swillingham 2005) asks readers to join in hailing quirky everyday creativity, but also to laugh at "awful, cringe-inducing howlers." In both attitudes, the shops are presented as quaint and a little bit sad. In this way, the shops may be elevated as last bastions of bad taste in gentrifying urban neighbourhoods. The aesthetics of their authenticity is an amenity ripe for consumption (see Zukin 2010).

The politics of the ad hoc pitch order against disorder. Against a landscape of sameness, the disorder is exotic. This exoticism may be even more pronounced as these shops dwindle in numbers. Understanding these places as ironic – acknowledging their relative authenticity – becomes a marker of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984). Though it may be cynical, this "ironic consumption" (Klein 2000: 33) also provides an escape and amusement for consumers. In their analysis of urban signage, Krase and Shortell (2011: 372, citing Ritzer 2003) explain that sometimes "phatic signs of working-class life become transformed into expressive signs of middle-class 'hipster' authenticity," thereby


aah!
BISTO
Favourite
GRAVY GRANULES
aah!
BISTO
Favourite
GRAVY GRAN
aah!
BISTO
CHICKEN
Favourite
GRAVY GRA

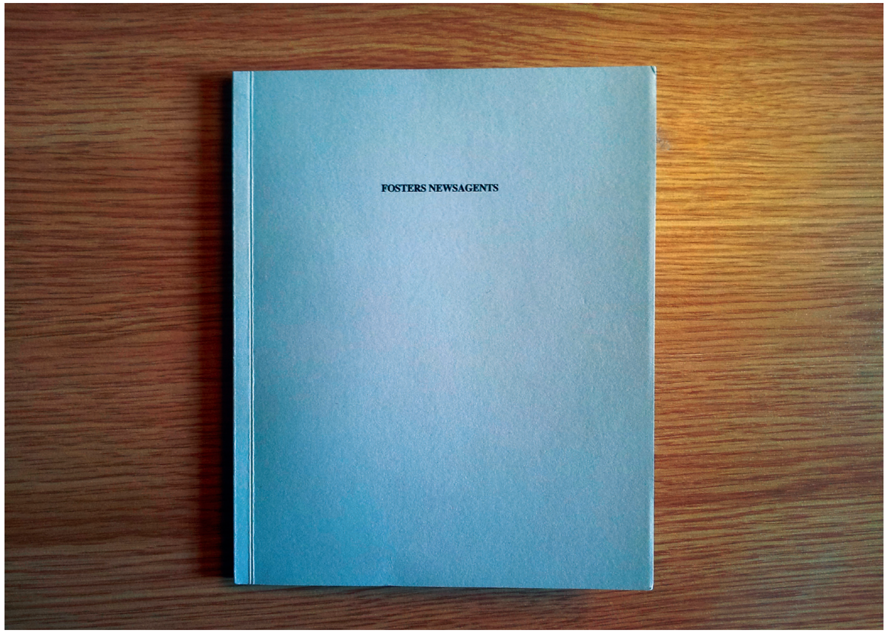
emptying them of distinctive local content and meaning.

Researchers and creative practitioners too may be driven by sentimentalising notions. As Latham (2003: 198) writes, "In too much culturally inflected work the everyday is reified as a pure, pristine realm, heroically unbowed by the grubby domination of the powerful." An exploration of the ordinary may treat subjects as naïve, consider everyday practice as unnecessarily precious, and do so in a spirit that positions the researcher or viewer in a superior state of knowing (see also Binnie et al. 2007; Thrift 2004). Wider commentaries on ethnographic poetics are discussed below as they relate to my practice of field work and are issues I return to later. These dangers remained in mind throughout my work.

In this project, then, I aim to elevate the status of ad hoc shopkeeping, to appreciate this everyday curatorial practice, and recognise the power of the everyday, without infantilising the keepers, objects, or practice. I hope that by working with the shopkeepers, learning from them, and sharing my experience and knowledge, I have been able to highlight the tenderness, attentiveness, and expertise with which these shops are kept, all while reflecting on my own position and power (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Katz 1992; McDowell 1992). Furthermore, though this may be a project of salvage archaeology in some ways, my aim here is to highlight the ad hoc – re-enchant it even (Bennett 2001; Woodyer & Geoghegan 2013) – without glamorising it.

Social difference

The exotic and ironic appeal of these shops is related to the aesthetics of the shop, but works across issues of social diversity as well. In his investigations into small groceries, Everts (2010: 850) notes that "we might reasonably expect that the ethnicity of the shopkeeper sells in the


FOSTERS NEWSAGENTS


106 BROCKLEY RISE
NEWSAGENTS
NEWSAGENTS
CONFECTIONERS
TOBACCONIST
STATIONERY
CONFECTIONER
FOSTERS TOBACCONIST
NEWSAGENT


10p MIX
20p MIX
NEW 30P

sense that the goods she or he sells become more 'exotic' or 'authentic' because they are sold within an ethnic context." The material difference of the shops too may be conflated with the different nationalities of the shopkeepers. Translocal aesthetics and the aestheticisation of difference (Zukin 1995:11) are issues I return to in Chapter Seven. As I will discuss, understanding difference in these shops is complex but also an opening to critically engage multiculturalism (Jackson 2002: 16).

Keepers of ad hoc shops represent London's diverse communities. In my study area, shopkeepers are variously from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, England, and perhaps more countries as well. In some instances, details of ethnic background did not arise; in others, they were deemed of little significance to me or the shopkeepers in the context of our relationship. While I did consider flows of their bodies – and mine – in relation to flows of objects, countries of origin seemed, at times, inconsequential. Following Miller (2008), I allowed shopkeepers to present themselves to me as they wished – listening instead of projecting upon them.

The shopkeepers who participated in my research represented a wide range of ethnicities, but also differ in their ages, family structures, residency statuses, religions, and interests. As detailed in the chapters that follow, personal styles of curation emerge from each shopkeeper's complex identity and circumstance. Feminist geographies in the 1990s advanced intersectionality, resisting tendencies to reduce people's identities and instead seeing social positions as relational (Phoenix & Pattynama 2006). Through my project, I focused on the "multiple identity" of the curators, where ethnicity is one facet of selfhood (Ram & Jones 2008, citing Gunaratnam 2003).

Research on ethnic minority businesses often places an "undue focus on 'ethnic' culture" (Ram & Jones, 2008: 368) and may, as a result, lead to cultural determinism. Ethnographies of transnationality (Mankekar, 2002: 77) can be traced without falling into traps of essentialism. For Crang, Dwyer, and Jackson (2003), a focus on transnational spaces need not be ethnically minoritised at all. As Pécoud (2004: 13) writes, a focus on practice and material can help "transcend particularisms and boundaries without negating them." Everts (2010: 848) found that attention to practice over nationalities helped him address "cultural difference without invoking essentialist notions of ethnicity". In his work on German groceries, he draws from Don Mitchell's (1995) conceptualisation of culture, seeing it not as an ontological given, but as something that describes certain activities that order the world (Everts 2010: 848). Similarly, a focus on commodities may help "locate accounts of the transnational in the particular movements of things, people, ideas, and capitals, yet avoid 'fixing' transnational spaces into overly simplistic and concrete forms" (Crang, Dwyer & Jackson 2003: 441). As described below, I combine these approaches – with foci on practice and material – to tangentially address the diversity of objects and people in London's ad hoc consumption spaces, while still considering transnationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Although ethnicity's significance cannot be assumed, notions of diversity, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism are of interest to this project. They are drawn out in depth in Chapter Seven. Briefly, my understanding of cosmopolitanism as it relates to this project is "non-elite, practical, and half-conscious" (Pécoud, 2004: 3, see also Vertovec 2010). I approach it as a sort of interconnectedness that is relational and practiced. In the chapters to come, I approach notions of vernacular cosmopolitanisms and multicultures as emerging from everyday material practice. Indeed, the material world shapes how social space is shared and contributes to banal identities held at global and local levels (Gilroy 2004; Nava 2007; Szerszynski & Urry 2002, 2006).

Theories of practice

While not exactly ad hoc, the methods I used were various and not always premeditated. They responded to situations I encountered, decentring my own position to some degree through the research process. This allowed the agency of the work to shape the practice of research. For Latham (2003: 2012) approaching practice and performance "requires a broadminded openness to methodological experimentation […] and the allowance of a certain amount of methodological naiveté" (see also Back 2007). Ultimately, a diversity of methods was used to draw out nuances in the everyday. Theoretically, my approach was the same. Akin to grounded theory (Charmaz 2001; Glaser & Strauss 1968), I did not start with a theory to prove, but a set of interests in these places – around material, the city, and everyday practice.

In Chapter Two, I expanded on my material concerns. Before I describe what I did practically, I want to describe how a focus on practice – as both a subject and a method of my research – was a logical approach in my project. These ideas flow through the thesis and bubble up in more focus in Chapter Five. Here, I draw out various theories of practice, including common currents in non-representational theory, or – as I prefer – more-than-representational theory, after Lorimer (2008a).

There are many theories of practice. Before I detail some of them, I want to highlight a few things they have in common and situate them loosely in terms of shopkeeping. For Schatzki (2012: 14, 1996), practice can be defined as "an open-ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus of doings and sayings." Practice concerns, and is central to, the organisation of social activities, which hang together to produce events; social phenomena are rooted in human practices. As highlighted below, all theories of practice are interested in the non-cognitive experience of the body to some degree. Like affects, practice exists before our thoughts and knowledge of it. In the case of shopkeeping, then, the movements and becoming of bodies and materials is not generated by the individual activities of shopkeepers, but by practice itself. As such, shopkeeping is an entity (see Shove et al. 2012): a perceptible assembling of elements and activities that emerge from instinctive practice. Shove and colleagues (2007: 12) write that "[theories] of practice emphasize tacit and unconscious forms of knowledge and experience through which shared ways of understanding and being in the world are established." This intuitive nature of practices makes them particularly useful in investigating the ad hoc.

Various theories of practice also address conventional dualities established by Descartes and Enlightenment thinkers: between agency and structure, stability and change, mind and body, human and non-human (see Amin & Thrift 2002; Bourdieu 1977; Schatzki 2010; Shove et al. 2012; Thrift 2007; Whatmore 2006). Shove and colleagues (2012: 3, following Giddens 1984), for example, see social change not as the sum


Russell SUPERMARKET
Russell's
Fresh Fruit & Veg
Russell's
Food & Wine
Russell's
News & Mags
oyster Ticket Stop


Russell SUPERMARKET
Russell's
Fresh Fruit & Veg
Russell's
Fresh Baked Bread
oyster Ticket Stop
Now Mobile

of individual decisions, or a result of pressure by external forces, but instead, shaped by structures reproduced through social activities. Similarly, anthropologist Tim Ingold (1993: 164) sees our actions not as structuring and transforming the world, but "part and parcel of the world's transforming itself". By describing the coming together and breaking apart of heterogeneous elements, change can be highlighted without attributing it to structure or agency (Shove et al. 2012: 22). Bourdieu's (1977) habitus similarly provides a meeting point between structure and agency. Described broadly as disposition, habitus is embodied. For Bourdieu, social agents not only act through feelings or practical logics of the body, but internalise social norms, practical consciousness, and rules of conduct. Like the work of Shove and her colleagues, Bourdieu's theory of practice both challenges this conventional dualism and addresses social change without prioritising human agency.

As an extension of their approaches to social phenomena, theories of practice also signal particular approaches to knowledge. Characterised by flow, emergence, and interaction, culture cannot be totalising, moralising, or static. It is without ontological existence, instead existing as versions and variations without an original (Mitchell 1995).

Non-representational theories

Recently, discussions of practice in cultural geography have been rather dominated by non-representational theory (NRT). Drawing on the work of Foucault (1982) and Merleau-Ponty (1945), NRT heeds the importance of practice and non-cognitive ways of knowing the world (Anderson & Harrison 2010; Lorimer 2005, 2007; Thrift 2004, 2007; Whatmore 2006). This orientation sees the world coming into being through movement and interaction, and aims to bring its materiality and sensuality back into focus.

Termed variously non-, post-, and more-than-representational, these approaches confront notions, propounded since geography's cultural turn, which tends to see space as a social construction. The theory's architect, Nigel Thrift (2004, 2007), criticises representational theories for privileging media, story-telling, histories, and other discourses over lived material reality, practice, and the experience of the body. Non-representational thinkers assert that landscapes are not empty canvases on which cultural constructs can be projected, written, and read, but are meaningful through the lived experience of the body and its social and material interactions (see Ingold 2000a).

Phenomenological literature credits Merleau-Ponty with placing the body at the centre of academic attention. Through our bodies, we experience the world and create ourselves. A body is "a thing among things" (Wylie 2007: 149) and a site where practices and performances begin. For Ingold (2000a), the world is meaningful not through the representations of the mind, but through inhabitation and dwelling – through a togetherness of beings and things on earth. For him, place is immediate and felt by bodies. The experience of affect, as discussed in Chapter Two, is central to these concerns of embodiment.

NRT also shows an appreciation of materials, aligning with the calls to rematerialise geography drawn out in Chapter Two. As discussed, Ingold (2007), in particular, asks why the meaning of material objects is too often inscribed from the outside instead of tuning into its material properties. The fleshier material concerns of Bennett (2010) and Miller (2005), discussed previously, resonate with a non-representational orientation which sees non-human actors – including material – as central to the formation of subjectivities.

For non-representational thinkers, like artefacts and natures, as humans, we are material. And like artefacts and natures, we are in motion – doing and becoming (Ingold 2000a). The thing-ness of objects and bodies is constantly coming into being and transforming (Amin and Thrift 2002;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worldwide partner
Lebara

Bennett 2001; Thrift 2007; Whatmore 2006). This action is said to emerge without a beginning, end, or linear pattern; one performance generates another (Pearson & Shanks 2001). The form and function of this performance is shaped by the material world (Pearson, 2006). And because "ways of acting in the environment are also ways of perceiving it" (Ingold 2000: 9), through action, places are understood and meaning is created.

Further theories of practice

Of course, recent accounts invested in NRT echo and rework longer standing bodies of work on practice, for example those associated with Bourdieu (1977), ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1974, 2002; Laurier 2004, 2009; Laurier & Brown 2008), and Actor Network Theory (Latour 2005). It is worth emphasising, then, that even recent interests in practice are not subsumed under NRT. Here, I briefly highlight these approaches to practice, and notable work by Shove and others (2007, 2012) and Schatzki (2010, 2012), highlighting how these other approaches chime with my project, especially in relation to material and work in the shops.

Ethnomethodology, for example, offers strategies that tune into everyday happenings. Coined by Harold Garfinkel (1974), it is a methodological approach that concerns the logics of practice and production of social order. It is not a method, but a study of methodologies: the ways that people understand their world. Accordingly, it is a technique that can work alongside more analytical approaches to phenomena (Laurier 2009). As well as academic enquiry, it concerns itself with the informal conversations, gestures, and practices of daily life and is particularly attuned to the ways in which embodied and lived experience produces the social (Garfinkel 1984). It sees everyday gestures and conversation as revealing (Laurier & Brown 2008). As such, it is driven by field work and ethnographic analysis, heralding the importance of becoming what it is you are studying: becoming a shopkeeper to study shops, for example (Garfinkel 1984; Laurier 2004, 2009). Like many theories of practice, ethnomethodology starts at the scene to understand social phenomena. As Garfinkel (2002: 93) writes, "whereas [formal analytic] studies focus on surveyable populations, in ethnomethodology the proposal is instead that it is the workings of the phenomenon that exhibits among its other details the population that staffs it." For Laurier (2009: 633), prioritising detailed inquiries into practice is what sets ethnomethodology apart from "more philosophically grounded post-structural geographies".

Ethnomethodology is useful in its commitment to understanding connections between human practice and place, and how place shapes the emergence of identities, agencies, and subjectivities (Laurier 2009). Importantly for this project, it is interested in the order in the mundane and in elevating mundane methods to the same level as the formal social sciences (Laurier 2009: 633). As Garfinkel (2002: 93) writes, "the phenomena of order consist of lived, immediate, unmediated congregational practices of production, display, witness, recognition, intelligibility, and accountability of immortal ordinary society's ordinary phenomena of order, its ordinary things, the most ordinary things in the world." Its championing of the ordinary and interest in daily routines of the workplace further lends itself to my project (Laurier 2009: 634).

Actor-network theory (ANT) is perhaps a more prevalent approach to practice in geography. Conceived by Latour (2005) and advocated by Callon, ANT is a way of looking at the relations between nonhuman, human, and semiotic actors, to consider how they assemble and behave. The theory sees the world as a nexus of networks composed of actors and intermediaries. In these networks of relations, actors do things and entities are circulated by these actions. Like non-representational theory and other theories of practice (Schatzki 1996; Shove et al. 2007), ANT


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Household Goods


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Hardware
Household Goods


MARC
LONDON
Cooltone


K & R Enterprise
london
Jewellery, Bags, Luggage, Scarfs, Gifts, Unstitched Suits, Tourist & Household Goods
MAR
CLOSING DOWN SALE
STOCK CLEARANCE
SALE
SOLD HERE
LATEST MODELS
MOBILE PHONES
NEW & USED
London Gifts & Souvenirs
SALE
LONDON

is concerned with the non-human world; things and concepts are included as actants in social networks. These things have agency and exist as social-material hybrids (Latour 1999). The key point of difference here is that, unlike practices which emerge through social structures (Schatzki 2010), ANT sees actions of actors as actions of individuals. Things are what they are because of their relations to others.

Theorists like Schatzki (2010) criticise ANT for its lack of focus on what things do. It is, however, constructive in the way it values material in the performance, processes, and flows of networks. As opposed to thinkers like Garfinkel, who tend to see material as a backdrop to social interaction, for others like Schatzki (2010: 123) "social phenomena are intercalated constellations of practices, technology, and materiality." Because they are tied up in everyday practices (Bourdieu 1977), many theories of practice stress attention to materials. To ground this rather abstract discussion in the shop, Schatzki might say that the shop's material environment "prefigures and mutually constitutes [shopkeeping practices] and is intelligible to the [shopkeepers] involved by virtue of their practices" (Schatzki 2010: 141). Thus, existing material is held in dialogue with practices, and through practices of shopkeeping, shopkeepers come to know the materials of the shop, first through their bodies.

For Schatzki, materials are produced along with practices, but remain distinct from them. He acknowledges that the actions of nonhumans do contribute to the emergence of practices, though he maintains "that human activity is the chief dynamo in social affairs" (Schatzki 2012: 21). For others, matters – of the shop and elsewhere – are equal participants and active before being set upon by shopkeeping practices. As discussed in Chapter Two, for some, matter is a vibrant and active participant in the emergence of things (Bennett 2010; Ingold 2010b; Hallam & Ingold 2007). Both humans and non-humans may contribute to the resonances that together comprise an environment of practices – what Ingold (1993: 164) calls a taskscape.

For Ingold (1993), dwelling describes how worlds are created through lived experience. As part of his dwelling perspective, Ingold uses taskscape to describe the heterogeneous embodiment of a landscape. In these taskscapes, skills of bodies are grown through active engagement with surroundings and space is remade through everyday actions. "Landscape," he writes "is the congealed form of the taskscape" (Ingold 1993: 162). The notion of taskscape gives practice an immediate spatialisation and chimes with the working space of the shop. Like materials in an assemblage, Ingold discusses tasks as relational – each task is held, and made meaningful, in constellation with others. Together, the embodied tasks of shopkeeping constitute acts of dwelling. For McFarlane (2011: 651), dwelling is also how the assemblage is put in motion; it is "how assemblage actually takes place". McFarlane's understanding of assemblage, then, is analogous to Schatzki's arrangements, just as Ingold's dwelling finds parallels in Schatzki's practices; practices or dwellings coupled with arrangements or assemblages combine to produce the social world. Here, I approach shopkeeping as a mode of dwelling that puts the assemblage of the shop in motion, in dialogue with the vibrant matter of objects.

Practice, the everyday & the shops

Daily life is a space of practices (Lefebvre 1984). Because practice is not conscious, but about moving through – getting on with – everyday routines and structures (Shove et al. 2012), all theories of practice are instrumental for studying the everyday. In their editorial on mundane geographies, Binnie et al. (2007: 517) acknowledge the value of non-representational approaches, in particular, to explore banal places, because the theories address:

> precisely the routines, habits, and skills that we employ on a day-to-day basis. Put


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> differently, nonrepresentational theories both within and beyond geography attend to the ways in which we "get by." What this literature affords a discussion of the banal and mundane, first and foremost, is attention to the sheer complexity and extraordinariness of the ordinary.

Because they connect to the everyday experience and doings of daily life, theories of practice have been used before to explore commercial spaces. For example, Laurier (2008) used ethnomethodology to explore the sequences and rhythms, place, and practice of breakfast in a café. In the special issue referenced above, Holloway and Hones (2007) explore the aesthetics and practice of commodities in Muji's display environments and in everyday spaces, showing how mundanity is produced relationally. In a more ad hoc context, Everts and Jackson (2009) used notions of practice to explore German grocers. Reflecting on their methodology, they note that the "advantage of the theory of practice is the fact that practices are a visible feature of everyday life and are directly observable. Every practice is a singular event but allows for generalised understandings and conclusions about the fabric of social life" (Everts & Jackson 2009: 922). These authors draw from Schatzki to address the routines and creative habits that produce the daily life in the shop. Hall (2011, 2013) too engages with practice, exploring the complex relationships between shared practice and place in her work on the diverse streets of Walworth Road and Rye Lane. Additionally, in her work, she considers how citizenship, migration, and super-diversity are practiced in space. Indeed, practice theories' ability to address everyday phenomena does not preclude their capacity to address politics as well. Citing Thrift, Latham (2003: 1997) writes that the social practices of everyday life are not only commonsensical and creative ways of being and shaping the world, but also ones that connect to "rationally grounded realms of social action such as 'the state,' 'the economic,' 'the political'" (see also J. C. Miller 2014). Sometimes politics may be as routine as the rhythms in the shop. Both are well attended by theories of practice.

Before I describe my own methodological practice, I want to reiterate that my methods are mixed and do not bind tightly to any one theory outlined here. Theories of practice – and NRT in particular – have been rightly criticised for privileging the affective experience of the body over the politics that might shape that experience. For Cresswell (2006) and Tolia-Kelly (2006), the movements and affects of the body must be seen with larger geographical, social, and cultural contexts. For them, as for me, these contexts – and their power geometries – shape what is possible and work on different bodies in different ways (see also Saldanha 2005). The representations in text and image are important to understand these contexts. Loosening NRT's adherence to practice also frees possibilities for research dissemination. Though it is a form of representation, Laurier and Philo (2006) make the case that description helps understand embodied encounters. As expressed later, description is important to my work here. For Lorimer (2008a: 554, citing Cresswell), then, a "representation (context) and non-representation (practice) [can be] held together – albeit sometimes in tension – rather than effecting a complete reversal of the earlier disciplinary tradition when signifying (con)texts were privileged over social actions." In other words, post-representational need not be anti-representational (Wylie 2007). I mention this especially in light of my interests in both politics and visual culture. As discussed later on, photography and other media may be seen as events experienced first through the body (Degan, DeSilvey & Rose 2008; Ingold, 2000a). In this way, photographic representation is not a world-structuring code, but another performance, or action, which occurs in a world of practice (Wylie 2007). This is not to diminish their politics. Indeed, like the politics of ad hoc shops, the politics of all ethnographic research cannot be ignored.

A practice of research

I use the second half of this chapter to describe my practice of research – how I went about investigating the practice and material of the shops. Accordingly, the rest of the chapter outlines: how I selected the site and identified the shops; how I walked this neighbourhood; how I approached my in-shop and on-street ethnographic work; how and why I engaged in a visual ethnography of the shops; how I supplemented these investigations with interviews, historical research, and policy and planning analysis; and finally how I approached textual construction through my analysis, blogging, and the style of the thesis.

Selecting the site & identifying shops

In this project, I focus on a neighbourhood and the ad hoc shops within it. This area is at the southern and easternmost end of the borough of Camden in Central London. Officially, it straddles the wards of King's Cross, Bloomsbury, and Holborn and Covent Garden. As outlined in Chapter Four, the site includes institutional powerhouses such as the British Museum, Senate House, University College Hospital, Coram's Fields, University College London, Birkbeck, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and King's Cross, Euston, and St Pancras Stations. It also includes social housing estates, a cooperative supermarket, scores of small hotels, and a generous handful of leafy squares. What's more, it includes not only the London headquarters of my university at Bedford Square, but also my home.

Studies of London's everyday commercial environments have taken different geographical approaches. Some have approached particular streets as units of analysis, including Hall's (2010, 2011, 2013) work on ethnic commercial highways and Massey's (1991) commentaries on Kilburn High Road. Others have looked at particular kinds of retail across different neighbourhoods, such as Watson's (2009) work on street markets. Owing to my interest in urban places, I chose to concentrate on a neighbourhood, thereby capturing shops facing the same local issues – similar morphology, development pressures, and social dynamics – but ones which do not necessarily operate together to form a cohesive retail area.

As highlighted in Chapter Four, the area I selected captures a broad socio-economic spectrum. It is a mixed neighbourhood with a diversity of people, shops, and textures. This avoids neighbourhood pigeonholing; this area cannot be reduced to an "ethnic neighbourhood" or a "tourist area" or a "student ghetto". It is a bit of all those things, which, I believe, aptly represents London. After Danny Miller (2008), it is a unique sort of nowhere – a fine-grained mix which lacks any particular identity. The diversity of the area is not only reflected in the sort of shops, but also in the textures of the ad hoc shops themselves, which endeavour to cater to this mix of people.

In the spirit of highlighting London's urban mixture, Marchmont Street acted as a starting point for my site delineation. Lying at the intersection of the wards of Bloomsbury and King's Cross, the street has a number of ad hoc shops, as well as specialised independent boutiques, ethnic restaurants, cafés, salons, etc. It is also the focus of the Marchmont Association (MA) – a resident and business association active in the material transformation of the neighbourhood. Local planning initiatives – driven by the MA and the massive redevelopment to the northeast around King's Cross Station – provided an entry into forces currently shaping the neighbourhood.

From Marchmont Street, I expanded my field study area. Euston Road to the north, Gray's Inn Road to the east, Theobald's Road to the south, and Tottenham Court Road to the west became logical boundaries. Upon reflection, these act as the natural borders of my own neighbourhood; most of my time is spent therein.

Within this area, I identified, mapped, and photographed the ad hoc shops. Businesses selected are all independent, sell things from multiple origins, and generally lack aesthetic narrative. These shops have the same material feeling. Unlike other local shops, they do not embrace a minimal aesthetics and seldom employ cohesive colour palettes. They are not sparse and twee. These criteria were subjective, but helped ensure that curatorial process was not dictated by a franchise licence or the plan-o-grams of a chain shop. After my survey, I identified 79 shops, which included corner shops, newsstands, other kiosks, discount stores, hardware stores, souvenir shops, and "one-stop shops" where multiple independent businesses share space to offer diverse products and services. With my site outlined, I mapped and walked.

Walking

Walking is a bodily and spatial practice, which is immediate, everyday, and personal. It is a way of both experiencing and making the city, a way of engaging with and perceiving our environments (Ingold 2000a). Walking has been increasingly used as an ethnographic method in academia and in arts practice (Philips 2005; Pinder 2011; Pink et al. 2010). A range of new topographic encounters celebrate the body's presence in space and the curiosity and momentary chance encounter it engenders. These include: the writings of Nick Papadimitriou, Iain Sinclair, and Will Self; the drawings of Laura Oldfield Ford; the performances of Mike Pearson (2006); the film-making of Patrick Keiller (2009; Daniels 1995); and the site-writing of Jane Rendell (2010). Approaches by these urban wanderers stimulate the affective qualities of place. Recent currents in cultural geography too have seized walking as a way to re-enchant the city and connect with – or cement or ignore – its politics (T. Butler 2006, 2007; Pinder 2011; Wylie 2005, 2006). de Certeau (1984) is often credited with bringing attention to the everyday creative practice of walking the city and highlighting the ways in which walking can rework and challenge urban place.

My project started by walking and looking. For me, walking provided a way to be with the neighbourhood, participate in its fabric, and tune into local changes. Though I have walked this neighbourhood since 2010, my particular attention to ad hoc shops in the area began in spring 2011. Walking became part of my mode of engagement. For Pink et al. (2010: 2), walking "encourages us to recognise the visual as always embedded in the multisensoriality and movement that is integral in the practice and experience of everyday life." Walking – with and without a camera – connected me to this place. It also meant that my engagement with the shops started on the street. I began by exploring the material and organisation of objects outside and their relationship to the street and city outside. In addition, through my patterns of walking, I become familiar with the shops, and the shop-keepers become familiar with me. This helped build relationships and find places for more in-depth ethnographic work. In the spirit of mobile exploration, Chapter Four begins as a narrated walking tour to structure my writing of the neighbourhood (Rendell 2005: 258).

In-shop ethnography

A focus on ethnography is key to my interests in practice. As described in the preceding pages, studies of practice begin with practices themselves, not individuals as the units of study (Shove et al. 2012). To understand social phenomena, we need to be there and look closely. Schatzki (2012: 25) writes:

> There is no alternative to hanging out with, joining in with, talking to and watching, and getting together the people concerned. […] Ethnography delves into the contemporaneous condition of particular bundles and constellations.

Nevertheless, because of its subjectivity, specificity, and potential blindness to its own performance, geography's embrace of ethnography has not always been enthusiastic. But for Herbert (2000: 564) "[g]eography's neglect of ethnography diminishes the discipline." He asks geographers to reconsider their limited use of ethnography in our disciplinary research. He continues his plea:

> No other methodology enables a researcher to explore the complex connections that social groups establish with one another and with the places they inhabit, cultivate, promote, defend, dominate and love. If sociality and spatiality are intertwined, and if the exploration of this connection is a goal of geography, then more ethnography is necessary. (Herbert 2000: 564)

The process and outcomes of ethnographic practice are unpredictable. In the course of research, though we cannot know or control how forces work through our ethnographic accounts (Clifford 1986), we can try to remain open to them and reflect upon their context.

As outlined earlier I too was a participant in the research. I performed this project through my own body – through walking, chitchatting, working in the shops, and other everyday exchanges. And as mentioned previously, my own multiple identity was negotiated with the project, shops, and shopkeepers. It shaped how I approached the project, and how my participants approached me. My understanding of planning and my role as an academic granted me authority in some eyes, but also became a point of wariness for others: Who was I? What was I doing? Was I from the Council? Why was I in the shops? Part of my participation in the shops became an ongoing dialogic introduction to my self and my work.

As I walked the neighbourhood, I made social contact with 56 of the 79 shops. Dialogues were most often initiated by a small purchase. I visited each shop every so often to hang out, chat, take photos, help out at times, and ask about the rhythms of the shop. My queries and attention were sometimes focused. One day, for example, I might visit a number of shops to look at, and ask about, the curation of fruit displays and the shopkeepers' use of Astroturf in the forecourt. This helped frame discussions and allowed me to contrast and compare practice and locate material threads woven through the neighbourhood. My online presentation of these themes is described later in this chapter. My reflections were recorded on-site with scratch notes and elaborated at the end of each day in a digital field diary.

My presence was usually a welcome way to dispel the shopkeepers' boredom. As mentioned, my attention to the material of the shop – to minute transformation of shop displays – was a source of delight to many shopkeepers. I noticed when they created a new display or reconfigured a shelving unit or got a new product in the shop and told them so. Although my gender and background may have afforded more focus on our difference, being an outsider played a positive role in developing relationships with many shopkeepers. Being from afar, with family elsewhere, was a point of contact. In addition, I work for my own family's business. And though that work as a distillery's Creative Director is a world away in a sense, I know what long unpaid hours are like and how important family issues play into building a business. Shopkeepers generally wanted to talk to me. When shopkeepers were not forthcoming, it was due to my obliviousness and insensitivity early in the research process. I quickly learned to avoid questions about suppliers, kiosk ownership, or ad revenues unless talking with the shopkeepers with whom I had built relationships of trust. These delicate subjects are caught up in the more dubious practices of ad hoc shops, which are discussed in Chapter Five.

I developed particularly close relationships with around ten shopkeepers and with two in particular: Daleel and Mo. Daleel managed a kiosk that sold convenience items – cigarettes, sweets, and cold drinks. The shop had been open for only a couple months before I arrived. Mo managed four kiosks – one which repairs and unlocks mobile phones and three specialising in luggage and weather goods: gloves, hats, scarves, sunglasses, umbrellas, and the like, depending on the conditions. He has been working as a trader on the street for over 30 years.

While chatting with Daleel over the counter one day, he invited me in. I subsequently worked over 120 hours in his stall. I returned on most days and was slowly introduced to, and became responsible for, the practices in the shop. Though I did work alone on a number of occasions, I was often accompanied by Daleel. This in-shop ethnography helped me gain experience of local rhythms, understand everyday organisational practices, and get close to materials. This also permitted participation in the curation of new displays. Furthermore, this work helped understand the things and forces shaping the curatorial process: shelving, catalogues, inspiration, and local policies. Obviously, by sharing space in a kiosk over a four month period, we talked about things that would not have come up had we been sitting across from each other at a table. Importantly too, the work in the shop helped me understand – through the movements of my own body – what shopkeeping practice feels like. Though Daleel's stories crop up throughout the thesis, Chapters Five and Seven are particularly indebted to the patience and candidness of this shopkeeper.

Work with Mo took a different shape. Over a period of one year, I helped this trader address pressures from the Camden Council and Transport for London to move one of his stalls and redesign the others. To assist in his campaign, I wrote advocacy letters, helped him set up a traders' association, and combed through policy to help him build a case. In addition to these tactics – which were planned over regular teas – I spent time with him in his stalls, chatting and folding pashminas. Besides our regular telephone contact, we met 22 times. Mo's participation offered the project a particular insight into the politics of material and its history.

Practices of image-making

Image-making was central to my research. From the outset, it was woven through my investigations; it operates not only as an output, but was part of my research practice. Consequently, though they may appear crystallised in this document, many images here are not meant as polished creations, but as fragments illustrating my process of research. A range of visual practices – photographs, diagrams, mappings, photo-montages – were enrolled in my methodology. Photography in particular became important in my approach to these places and will be the prime focus here. I used photography to capture the material in these places, create biographies of families of objects, generate typologies across shops, create shop-front portraits, catalogue objects, document varying styles of curation and discuss them with shopkeepers, and more.

Some of the images in this thesis are illustrative. Others do something different. Here I elaborate on my visual approach to the textures of these spaces and on ways of doing photography in urban space (see also Hunt 2014).

The social sciences and humanities have rich traditions of employing visual culture in research practice and dissemination. Photography has enormous value for explorations of places that document, compare, explore, and tune into environments using the camera. It actively contributes to diverse geographical knowledge (Rose 2008: 151) and has been used in myriad ways to support cultural geographical research: as illustrations, as means of comparison, as visual data, as (found) objects of analysis, as means of engaging participants through photo-diaries and interviews, in photo-essays, and more. The extensive use of photography by geographers has been well detailed (Markwell 2000; Rose 2001, 2010, 2012; Ryan 1997, 2013; Schwartz 1996; Schwartz & Ryan 2003). My use of visual ethnography here sits within a vast field of photographic visual culture, including auto-photography (Datta 2012; Jemison 2011; McIntyre 2003; Oldrup & Carstensen 2012), online photo-sharing (see Murray 2008), the analysis of historic photography (see M. Crang 1996, 1997; Nead 2004), visually recording sociopolitical landscapes (Farrar 2005), photographic juxtaposition (see Hall 2010), video (Garrett 2010), and installation.

Since its inception, photography has been used to respond to the "visual complexity of a city as both an image and an experience" (Clarke 1997: 75). Although the use of photography in urban research is not new, some current explorations approach urban image-making in a different way. This practice chimes with contemporary enquiries that highlight feelings, textures, and experience of place and draw from the theories of practice described above. In my research, I use photography as illustrative, but also task it with capturing these more intangible aspects of urban space, via my practice of working with a camera and in a spirit of collaboration with place. In this way, I hope images may both describe place and expose it as unknowable.

This approach is not exclusive to urban contexts. Caitlin DeSilvey's (2007a, 2007b) work in a Montana homestead, John Wylie's (2006) images of north Devon coastal landscapes, Stephen Bond's photographs of spaces of repair in England's South West (Bond et al. 2013; DeSilvey et al. 2014), and Tim Edensor's (2005) shots of industrial ruins provide examples of captivating work occurring in more rural environments. In the city, cultural geography research has made surprisingly limited use of photography, though notable exceptions include: Latham and McCormack's (2007; 2009) pedagogical fieldwork in Berlin; Latham's (2003) and Bijoux and Myers (2006) use of diary photographs; Coles' (2014) topographic photographic essay of London's Borough Market; Edensor et al.'s (2008) photographic essay of the London Olympic site; Simpson's (2012) time-lapse photography pursuing rhythmanalysis in public space; and Johnsen et al.'s (2008) auto-photography work with homeless people. I hope the thesis illustrates the potential of photography in cultural geography's urban research.

Whereas it has much to offer ethnographic investigations, photography is not without its critics and dangers. Uncritical floundering with a camera, false sense of knowing while skimming the surface, impressionable beautification of everything, trivialisation and disempowering of the subject, and selectivity of the frame, all allow a photographer to cast images in problematic ways (see Rose 2012). Researchers championing critical visual methodologies in anthropology (Banks 2001; Pink 2007), cultural studies (Lister & Wells 2000), sociology (Back 2009a; Holliday 2001; Knowles 2006; Knowles & Swetman 2004), and cultural geography (Rose 2012) have all stressed the importance of reflexivity and warned against the uncritical use of both cameras and images. As Sarah Pink (2003) cautions, visual research is often done about or on subjects instead of with them.

Until recently, academics interested in critical visual methodologies concerned themselves very little with what these images could do for research practice, or how research practices could reshape such photography, concentrating instead on what these images meant.

Whereas realist approaches see photographs as objective forms of evidence, critical poststructuralist approaches privilege the construction of images and choices made in the image-making process over image content (Pink 2007). These methodologies see photographs as partial fragments and tend to use them as objects of analysis, embedded and meaningful in the cultural context of their production, capture, and site of viewing (Becker 2007; Rose 2012; Schwartz & Ryan 2003). Photographs have been approached by poststructuralists as problematic "representations fraught with cultural meaning" (Rose 2008: 152), and yet they may also offer new ways of doing research.

Cautions against photographic objectification, masculine approaches to subjects in professional street photography (Halliday 2012; Rose 2001), and a shift towards image analysis dissuaded researchers from using photography in urban research. But perhaps, as Sanders (2007) suggests, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. With a reflexive awareness of attitude and approach, researchers are now navigating these pitfalls to integrate visual methods into doing research and as part of ethnographic research.

The image-making in my project is part of human geography's recent return to making images. Photography is included in geography's recent groundswell of visual culture production and part of what Tolia-Kelly (2012: 135) calls the "neo-visual turn". Instead of acting as commentators external to artistic processes, cultural geographers have begun engaging directly with creative arts practice (Miles 2006) and energising the discipline as a result (P. Crang 2010). In this way, photographs are not merely objects of analysis or illustrations, but form part of a research practice – "a mode of argument and creative performance" (Ryan 2003: 236). Rather than illustrating findings, these photos "illustrate an analysis" (Rose 2008: 158) and an approach to place; they represent "research as practices" (Rose & Tolia-Kelly 2012: 3).

Contemporary mapping too has been discussed in the same way. Rather than an ontological device, Crampton (2009) makes a case for mapping – the making and using of maps – as a performative practice and a way of becoming. Similarly, Perkins (2004) argues for mapping as a practice (albeit increasingly neglected), not merely a technique used to support words.

These shifts respond to calls by Latham (2003: 2000) and others (see Ryan 2003; Thrift 2000) to "imbue traditional research methodologies with a sense of the creative, the practical, and being with practice-ness". Such approaches also confront disconnections between geographical research and its representation, identified by Sanders (2007), della Dora (2009), and others. Though it is certainly not the intention of all academics or photographers, these approaches may also materialise more-than-representational approaches, connecting critical reflection and doing photography. As Latham and McCormack (2009: 256) suggest,

> the generation of images can [...] work to foreground the peculiar quality of materiality to which non-representational approaches to the urban encourage us to attending: materiality as distributed, relational and obdurate. In this sense images provide ways of thinking the materialities of cities in movement and stillness.

As part of this neo-visual turn, and in line with some theories of practice outlined above, geographers are engaging in "artistic practices [that] provide a way of folding uncertainty into the act of producing an account" (Dwyer & Davies 2010: 93). While this photographic work may also be illustrative, it does not try to define

places visually or pin them down. Instead, it sees space as unfolding. By their nature, photographs are polysemic (Barthes 1981). This is an asset to methodological approaches that use images "as prisms that refract what can be seen in quite particular ways" (Rose 2008: 151). New photographic approaches invite multiple and imaginative readings by their audience and photographer. Without concern for truths and realist paradigms, the ambiguity of images is considered an advantage both in the execution of a project and interpretation of results (Knowles & Sweetman 2004). This vagueness may keep research loose. It may also help support approaches to research like mine, concerned with transient feelings, textures, and experience.

Visualising the shops

Image-making was part of inhabiting and rethinking the value and practice of ad hoc shops. It has been used by others too to explore everyday places and shops in particular. For example, employing visual strategies in fieldwork helped Hall (2010) understand difference and connect everyday life on the street with the larger politics of urban change. Some facets of image-making make it particularly useful to interrogate banality and everydayness. These include its ambiguity, ability to highlight the agency of place and things, capacity to play with hierarchy, and engagement with the body. Here, I explore these potentialities in relation to my research.

Ambiguity

In my visual ethnography I used two particular strategies to avoid over-familiarisation and to capture feeling: I focused on material and embraced the unpredictable qualities of analogue technologies. Firstly, then, throughout the thesis some images focus on textured urban surfaces to "convey the qualities of materiality more directly to the viewer" (Rose 2008, p. 155). The texture of Astroturf, the lint stuck on the back of a sticker, and the shininess of a branded biscuit package are all important. In my images, I hope to show that ad hoc shops are vibrant with material and sensory richness (Rose 2012: 298), and to give space for the materiality to reveal itself.

Secondly, I embraced distortion, thereby acknowledging that not everything is, or need be, visible (Pink 2003). In a series of pinhole camera images – seen here, in Chapter Five, and in Chapter Six on the brand – I hope to leave open possibilities of space and objects through a muted softer visual tone. As well as using a D-SLR, a point and shoot, and my mobile phone camera, I used this simple device. The results were unpredictable: because the shutter is manually opened for a number of seconds and the film is manually wound, the images are blurry and warp in intriguing ways. The process captures the animation of things and spaces – the unsteadiness of my hand, the flow of the city, and the vibrations of stationary things. It brings softness to the characteristic linearity and shininess of the brands I capture; the camera literally takes the edge off, melting brands into the texture of the city.

Practically, this technology shifted my relationship to the shops and shopkeepers. Without a viewfinder, the pinhole mediated my experience of space much less than a D-SLR; my presence and eye contact in the space remained uninterrupted. The unobtrusive objectness of the camera helped make images with places, not of them. It was also a talking point for shopkeepers who were curious about the little wooden box. While it simplified the practice of photography in some ways, working with this low-tech device complicates the relationship between matter and image-making; agency was afforded to light, chemicals, and chance. Observing the material in – and of – my practice made photography more physical and helped interrogate the relationship between camera and place. As it was visualised, space became more material and felt.


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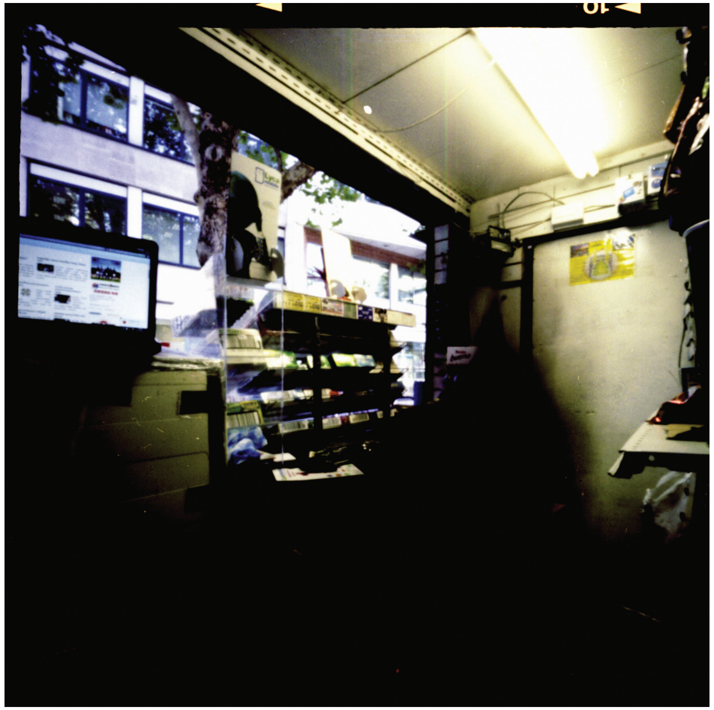


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Agency

As outlined in Chapter Two, I am interested in the vibrant matter and affective capacities of ad hoc shops. Some approaches to photographic practice not only document places but also evoke this sort of feeling. They endeavour to make photographs with places, not of them. This is not unlike the more collaborative relationships that researchers strive to develop with human research participants discussed at the outset of this chapter. Indeed, these approaches imply character and agency of place. Rose (2008: 155) dubs this photography "evocation", which suggests summoning the supernatural and aptly implies its ability to highlight affective power. By acknowledging the agency of place, landscape and objects become participants in the photographic practice and may seem to come alive (Bennett 2010).

Photography in general – and street photography in particular – has been discussed as an aggressive way of looking (Berger 1972; Rose 2001, Sontag 1977). Urban photographers have sought to counter this with a more dialogic visual practice, as a way of exchanging gazes (Back 2007). This notion of exchange can be extended to the non-human world of the shops as well. Although not referring explicitly to photography, for Merleau-Ponty (1945: 197) "our gaze, prompted by the experience of our own body, will discover in all other 'objects' the miracle of expression". Following materialists like Bennett (2010; see also Amin & Thrift 2002; Thrift 2007; Whatmore 2006), things too may reveal themselves to us and may indeed stare back through our photographic practice. Sontag (1977: 98) writes that "one of the perennial successes of photography has been its strategy of turning living beings into things and things into living beings". In light of a new materialist ethics, I considered how we might turn objects into things, solicit their gazes, and capture their more-than-human potential. With a camera in hand, I got down to the level of a Wall's sign to listen in, visualised the grittiness of dust on a shelf, and felt the cracks on a brittle rubber band. I endeavoured to lock eyes with things, allowing each a chance to reveal its stories.

Hierarchy

Chapter Four highlights how cities are dynamic assemblages of interconnected objects, people, surfaces, and forces (DeLanda 2006). Each macro happening can be traced through scales of consideration to smaller and smaller parts (Bennett 2010). Like its appreciation of agency, the camera can help tune into the micro-geographies of place – to objects and their component parts – to reveal the significance of everyday textures and the matter of things. I used photography to explore the relationships between objects and space, and play with the perceived value of mundane things.

Photography has long been discussed in association with the uncanny – making the familiar strange (Barthes 1981; Rose 2008). By acknowledging the power and performative capacity of images, I used photographs to destabilise understandings of the shops and question their perceived value. For Tim Hall (2009: 460), "photography produced and presented experimentally can be used to question, criticize, or deconstruct the taken for granted by representing it in new or unusual ways". Focussing on the materiality of things – theoretically and photographically – minimises difference and allowed me to rethink my encounters with everyday objects in the shop. Although this flattening has been described as problematic (Sontag 1977), armed with awareness of the lens' capacity to play, the camera may not just flatten, but elevate objects, granting them status. As seen on page 140, through selective focus, for example, a cheap souvenir in a vast array of like objects becomes a prized star of display. In other examples seen in Chapter Five, I highlight the order and linearity of product displays, challenging conceptions that they are ruled by material chaos.

Embodied encounters

Photographs capture an instant of urban life – itself a stream of moments, interactions, and exchanges. Images expose not only an instant of time and space, but also a moment of exchange between photographer, people, places, and things. These relationships are revealed in the frame. John Berger (1972: 9) writes that "we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves". Image-making is inherently collaborative (Pink 2003); we expose our attitudes and approaches to places and people in the images we make (Back 2009a). An open approach may encourage subjects to offer themselves and their gaze. Through this project I appreciated that making an image is an event, an invitation for exchange, and a moment that cultivates and reveals my relationships with the shop, its things, and keepers.

As well as exposing our attitudes, photographs also reveal the presence of our bodies in space. Whereas in some images I literally picture myself, I am there in all of them. Street photography has been described as "the expression of one's whole organism in the photographic act" (Scott 2007: 4). This harks back to the notions of practice discussed earlier in this chapter. Looking is always an embodied practice (Pink 2003), and representations of place have always emerged through situated practice and performance (Driver 2003). Focusing on the practice of photography reminds us how important the body is in the experience of place and production of visual culture (M. Crang 1997). Because it explores place through the body and the view, photography aligns with Ingold's (2000a: 22) "education of attention". Though it doesn't always, a camera in hand can heighten awareness of the visual and material aspects of space. It can make us look at space and think about it in different ways; we make sense of the city through dialogue with the camera (Halliday 2006). This process of reviewing and rethinking is central to my practice of research.

As well as capturing events and exchange, by staying open, photography can capture potential. In the literal snap of the camera, photography can visualise moments of encounter, commemorate them, and create them. The images of the shop capture one moment in the lives of things and shopkeepers and help narrate their stories. Photography captures not only presence and instants, but also the potential of urban space. Urban photography "translates the given into something virtual or latent, something which has yet to realise itself in all its possibilities" (Scott 2007: 41). I hope it captures the affective potential of my encounters and the relationships in the shops.

The approaches I have outlined here – tuning into material, embracing the unpredictability of analogue technologies, animating objects, elevating the banal, and attending to my presence and embodied encounters – are, at times, fairly playful. They helped challenge ideas that photographs are truthful, accurate, and transparent (Rose 2003b; Ryan 2003). This supports approaches to research which avoids projected truths and realist paradigms to open space for interpretation. As visual outputs, photography, drawing, and mapping need not pin place down, but can instead offer "differentiated views of life" and create spaces for interpretation (Hall 2010: 16).

My images offer one way of seeing. Like all photos, mine were selectively framed. Then, from over 5,000 images captured, I chose particular ones to show here. The images were selected for a range of reasons – some rational, some intuitive: because they seemed to visualise my theoretical concerns; because they have some aesthetic resonance; because they annoy me; or because they are in focus, though, it must be said, not all are. Subsequently, many of the chosen ones were edited – corrected for the lop-sidedness of my hand, the fish-eye of the lens, the drabness of the light conditions. As if to take the subjective qualities of image-making to their limit, I also include some photomontage throughout


GUINNESS
EXTRA STOUT
ST. JAMES'S GATE DUBLIN
GUINNESS
PLAY BOY
PARTY PACK
BEER MATS
Callaway
Goodness
GUINNESS
JACK DANIEL'S

the thesis; in a few instances, I intentionally manipulated or manufactured images to create new meanings or realities. Like the openness of text, and potential of photography, photomontage opens up possibilities for diverse readings. Artists like Duchamp, Man Ray, Moholy-Nagy, and Hannah Höch used juxtapositions of photomontage to create new meanings and societal order. For these artists, it made the familiar strange in often playful ways; in their work, "the link with real life had become more elastic, increasing the discursive space within the image, between what is shown and what can be understood" (Frizot, 1998b: 449; see also Clarke 1997). Though I am not seeking artistic comparison, for me, photo-montage is another way to explore the openness of my analysis, to play with the order and disorder of the shops, and to expand their notions of value. In keeping with traditional rigours and conventions of social scientific research, I have noted where images are fabricated in the list of figures. On this note – and as part of my interests in showing over telling and leaving space for interpretation – I have omitted captions for my images throughout the thesis. For a more narrated account of the visual, readers are welcome to consult the figure descriptions included at the end of the thesis.

Finally, I want to reiterate that the artistic merit and aesthetic qualities of the photographs are not the point here. I hope that instead of standing as completed representations, they evoke material, feeling, and analysis. Notwithstanding how they are received here, the process of making these images allowed me to engage and recognise the shops in visual and sensory ways that may have been impossible without them.

Supplemental investigations

In addition to my on-street, in-shop, and visual ethnographic work, complementary investigations included: doing historical research of the local area; analysing policy that guides street trading, forecourt displays, and signage; looking into local development strategies and initiatives of Business Improvement Districts (BID) and neighbourhood associations; considering current policies, guidelines, and trends affecting retail on high streets; and examining data on local social and economic development. These activities used a range of sources, including: history texts and publications of the Camden History Society; official Camden Council policies; development plans and promotional documents for local urban development projects like King's Cross; neighbourhood association and BID annual reports, promotional materials, and websites; retail and high street reports produced by, and for, local and national governments, think tanks, and retailers' associations like the Association of Convenience Stores; neighbourhood planning documents; and articles in the popular press. While reviewing these sources, I paid particular attention to themes of material, practice, and aesthetics. This allowed me to contextualise the micro scale activity in ad hoc shops within a larger political economy and understand the conditions that shape everyday practice.

In addition to these textual sources, I conducted supplementary semi-structured interviews with three local planning officials, and four elected representatives from the local area. I also connected with members of local community groups at community meetings, where I learned about the interests of local stakeholders, including neighbourhood associations and institutions. In addition, I attended a networking event with members of the branding community where I was able to get the brands' perspective on these shops. I maintained contact with the Director of The British Brands Group, with whom I engaged over email with follow-up questions.

Textual Construction

Analysis

As noted above, my methods were mixed and remained flexible in response to my findings. To systematise the fragmentary research process, as the work proceeded, I maintained files on various themes. Upon its completion, I coded my research diary, interview transcripts, and photographs according to the various themes and subthemes of my project. I also maintained a digital file on each shop: with collected field notes, images, shopkeeper details and stories, branding interventions, etc. This organisational strategy allowed me to compare images and thoughts through time for each shop, and also compare them by shop type and by type of object across the shops. As illustrated in Chapter Five, this strategy allowed the ready comparison of different approaches to anchor postcard racks across the neighbourhood, for example. The position of the postcard anchor in front of each shop was also documented via this structure. This helped build a picture of shared and variegated material practices. This analysis of my ethnographic material was illuminated by the politics and histories drawn out in my supplemental explorations, as discussed above.

Blogging

Many stories told through the thesis were trialled first online. From the official start of my field work, in January 2012, I maintained an online visual field blog – or photoblog (Cohen 2005) – at http://keepingshop.blogspot.com/. Like many researchers, I used my blog to immediately connect with publics, disseminate information in multiple formats, create dialogue, and open possibilities of collaboration. Blogging is a popular platform for geographers interested in exploring new ideas, cultivating enthusiasm, engaging in debate, and thinking through research (Fuller & Askins 2010). It offers ways of participating through a research process (Gauntlett 2011). Though they are not recognised formally as academic outputs, blogs may also help researchers cultivate roles as public intellectuals (Kirkup 2010).

At keepingshop.blogspot.com, 31 individual posts share my work with popular and academic audiences. The blog was a mode of making my academic production accessible (Gregg 2006; Kirkup 2010), but also a systematic way to focus on particular aspects of the shops. Like the directory bloggers discussed by Reed (2008: 404), the act of blogging was as much a motivation as the audience it might cultivate. As I will discuss, through my project, I explored different ways to tell stories about ad hoc shops through the juxtaposition of image and text. My blog was a site of that experimentation. I approached my posts as reflective snapshots that used visual storytelling. As such, they were helpful in thinking through the material and meaning of ad hop shops and in the generation of the thesis.

Thesis style & assembly

The production of this thesis is intimately connected to my research subject and approaches. I hope the form it takes becomes part of its argument. At times, this volume resembles an ad hoc collection of materials. As well as straight academic writing, I create a montage of other narratives and visual materials. Presenting scholarly work as an ad hoc assemblage is not without precedent. The work of Caitlin DeSilvey (2007a, 2007b, 2012), for example, constitutes the weaving together of materials, associations, reflections, and oral histories. In the spirit of vernacular curation, I endeavour to capture the feeling and forces of ad hoc places through material montage. My approach is chorographic (Pearson 2006), at times blurring creative and critical writing, sampling from biographies and histories, and including lay knowledge and personal observations. Combining these sorts of approaches serves the complexity and contradictions of the shops, while also challenging forms of knowledge that have static or singular points of view (Rendell 2005: 258). Here, I describe some of the heterogeneous elements presented in the thesis and their assembly.

Earlier in this chapter, I outlined my approach to visual culture production. Like images, my field notes also have a substantial presence in this document. They were written with scratch notes in hand at the end of each day "in the field." My diary was also enhanced by using my photographs as aide-mémoires. It stands at 57,500 words. Like my use of photography, writing became a way of recognising the shops. The style of prose in my field notes varies: sometimes it is personal and reflective, sometimes it is flat and matter-of-fact, sometimes it takes the form of lists and inventories, other times it is deeply descriptive (see Geertz 1973). It was important to my theoretical interests to write through the rich material of place as well as my relationship to it "materially, conceptually, emotionally, and ideologically" (Rendell 2007: 180).

As expressed earlier, throughout the project's execution, I tried to remain aware of my influence. This was no different throughout the writing and production of the thesis. Words and images are powerful means to understand and shape place; writing can be both poetic and political. As Knowles and Harper (2009: 19) write, "to photograph and to write is to arrange the world through a kind of alchemy." Since the 1980s, ethnographic commentary has been concerned with the complexities of producing ethnographic literatures and with how we write culture (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Through scholarly work, we write place as well (Tuan 1991). These sentiments resonate with Berger's (1979) thoughts on images: just as images show who we are, writing is also a way of showing ourselves. In view of this, as scholars, we have a responsibility to understand how our writing shapes the places and lives we study, and also to recognise its subjectivity. Though we may depict things in photographs and in text, they remain unknowable. As Clifford (1986: 7) writes: "ethnographic truths are […] inherently partial – committed and incomplete." Though reflexivity is paramount – and may even be paralysing – recognising the inherent creativity and relationalities of writing and crafting a thesis may also open up its possibilities.

The various ways this thesis is written is part of how it is assembled and what it hopes to do; style and form are part of its substance. For Lorimer (2008b: 2):

> Various creative writing enterprises – I think here of essays, photo-essays, travelogues, prose-poetry, ethnographic and site-specific portraits, storytelling, life-writing and memory work – demonstrates a growing willingness to experiment with the character and form of writing, and a preparedness to consider style as a pressing issue rather than a supplementary concern.

My experiments in writing style are accompanied by experiments in layout and form. In particular, I use montage at times throughout the thesis as a way to narrate the stories of the shop. On her experience of recollecting and creatively writing through remains at a Montana homestead, DeSilvey (2007b: 421) writes that "incoherence does not have to signal incomprehension, but may instead open a working space which respects the complexity of the historical subjects we study." DeSilvey's careful use of juxtaposition draws from Walter Benjamin's literary montage used in *The Arcades Project* (1999). His fragmentary "thought-images," or Denkbilder, dance together like illuminating snapshots of life that resist its definition. On his approach, Benjamin (1999: 460) writes: "I needn't say anything. Merely show." For Stewart (2007: 5) this sort of approach "does not find magical closure or even seek it, perhaps only because it's too busy just trying to imagine what's going on." Benjamin's style has inspired many geographers. Here, Allan Pred (1995: 25) performs his interests in literary assemblage:

Through assembling (choice) bits
and (otherwise neglected or discarded) scraps,
through the cut-and-paste reconstruction of montage,
one may attempt to bring alive,
to open the text to multiple ways of knowing,
and multiple sets of meaning,
to allow differently situated voices to be heard,
to speak to (or past) each other
as well as to the contexts from which they emerge
and to which they contribute.

The approach has inspired other geographers more recently. For example, drawing from both Benjamin and Pred, Cresswell (2014) uses montage in his chapter on Place and Chicago's Maxwell Street Market. Like other authors, Cresswell explains that the style is intended to provide space for different readings, and approaches to place.

Throughout the thesis, as well as presenting my narrated snapshots from the field, excerpts contain additional voices too. This serves to decentre the notion of a singular viewpoint. Like my field notes, these excerpts are inserted into my more academic writing as stories. As seen at the beginning of this chapter, visually they appear in a distinctive serif font and are flagged with a first initial. Some of these stories include dialogue that was reconstructed from my scratch notes. When the quotes and dialogue are reconstructed, I reference them as "field notes." When they are verbatim, from interview transcripts, for example, they are referenced as "interview." Names of participants have been changed.

This thesis is only one story of these places, but is composed of many other tales told by different media. The work assembles various writings, photographs, field notes, quotes, photomontage, maps, diagrams, and sampling from elsewhere. The untraditional presentation of the thesis – landscape orientation, double-sided – accommodates this varied material and provides space for its juxtaposition. I trust the format gives the material – and the reader – space to breathe. Through this work, I endeavour to develop a new method of visual story-telling. This approach represents a significant part of the original contribution made by the thesis.

Aesthetically, I hope the text, field notes, diagrams, maps, and images resonate with each other on the page and through each chapter. The organisation of components is meant to be visually interesting, but also – and perhaps more importantly – to create synergies and tensions to heighten my argument. The relationship between these elements shifts through the thesis. For example, some images sit on the page as evocative illustrations directly narrated by field notes; others sit alone; still others sit together in photographic essays to suggest similar, or different, phenomena working across or through the shops. Sometimes I speak for images to heighten the reader's attentiveness to the material in them, and other times hope the images might speak for themselves in relation to the themes of the chapter or in relation to each other. Indeed, like a child's "spot the difference" picture game, some photographic series in this chapter are meant to tune and heighten the reader's attention to material. Field notes are also curated differently throughout the thesis. Sometimes they are placed in the main text and addressed directly in my more scholarly voice, other times they are set apart from the text, and sometimes clustered in groups – speaking to each other, contradicting each other, telling each other's stories from different points of view. Like material in the shops, the written and the visual may grate. This friction is meant to allow space for the consideration of other stories, possibilities, and points of view.

Overall, my ad hoc, yet curated, approach acknowledges that these places are difficult and multiple. I hope that the layers of creative writing, juxtapositions, and assembly expand points of view to provide alternate routes into these shops, while balancing the rigours of scholarship.


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Confectionery
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Stationery
EL PAIS
LE FIGARO


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Bury
FOOD & WINE
OPEN
FOOD & WINE

Conclusions: Approaching the ad hoc shop

This chapter details my approach to ad hoc shops – personally, ethically, practically, theoretically, methodologically, politically, and visually. It begins by describing how my academic and professional background shaped the relationships with the shops and their keepers and the development of the project. Throughout the research, I tried to sensitively negotiate the difference of the shop. I present my approach to the commercial and aesthetic difference of the shop: highlighting without unduly romanticising or exoticising it. I then describe how I approached social difference without assuming the significance of ethnicity. Instead I address it tangentially through material and practice. Following this, I present my mixed approaches to practice and my practice of research. The theories of practice I outline concern the experience of the body in the world. I detail non-representational theories and more theories of practice, discussing how they are valuable to understand the everyday routines and doings in the shops and how they engage with material. However, I also raise criticisms of these approaches: a focus on practice has to be kept in balance with an understanding of political contexts.

In the second half of this chapter, I present my practice of research. First, I describe how and why I selected the site and shops and how I used walking to engage with the shops and understand their relationship to the city. Ethnography is justified for its attention to everyday practice and meanings. I outline my approach to ethnographic practice, how I engaged with the shops, and detail two in-depth interactions with shopkeepers that provided different insights into the world of shopkeeping. In a more detailed section on image-making, I outline how contemporary modes of photography, in particular, may evoke the feeling and texture of place. I present how I sometimes use images to highlight ambiguity, agency, hierarchy, and embodied encounters of the shops. The visual is used in my project to at once stay open while tuning in. I acknowledge that making images is subjective, and even more so through my use of photomontage. I then detail supplemental investigations including historical and policy research and interviews.

In the final section, I detail my textual construction: the analysis of my field material and photos, the use of my blog, and the style of my thesis. I argue that the varied style and the content of the thesis are intimately connected and that montage is an appropriate way to capture the complexity of the shops and narrate their multiple stories.

Overall, the chapter has argued for a variegated approach to these shops – combining practice with representation; history with textures; politics with feeling – to respond to their complexity and draw out their nuance at different levels. Following these theoretical and methodological musings, Chapter Four reacquaints us with the experience of the city and the feeling of the ground.

4

City building & vernacular practice

Central London: an assemblage of people, paths, architectures, smells, materials, institutions, animals, stories, homes, and more. Material on the street shows a vernacular process of city building that is mirrored in ad hoc shops. These places are rich in material complexity, heterogeneous, and familiar sites of making do. They are also intrinsically nested in the social rhythms and urban material of London. The neighbourhood is in perpetual motion. But recently, change has been caffeinated by investment. The rise of business improvement districts, neighbourhood associations, local branding efforts, and the shiny redevelopment at King's Cross, have brought the matter of ad hoc shops into institutional sights. To ward off economic decline, new strategies for high streets and modes of urban governance work to affectively engineer urban neighbourhoods, narrating their material and declaring their "vibrancy." The vitality imagined by these schemes may conflict with the vibrant materialism of the ad hoc shop. Material long part of the neighbourhood, and long part of these shops, is increasingly deemed out of place.

The neighbourhood

Let's take a walk. We begin on Mecklenburgh Square, where I first began exploring the neighbourhood. We submit to the natural pull towards London's centre and head west along the narrow footpath beside the Coram's Estate football pitch. In autumn 2013, the path was widened and repaved, bringing full attention to the splendour of the plane trees; once skirting the trail, the trees – two centuries old – now rise from its centre. Besides the paving, the materials are the same, but their new relationship has shifted their presence. Despite the revitalisation, my neighbours still call it "Mugger's Alley."

"Unfortunately one of our members was mugged in the alleyway behind Coram's Fields this evening at 6.20pm. The football lights were on and the area was well lit but despite this he was aggressively accosted by three youths who took his mobile phone and some change he had in his pocket. You should not use this alley way day or night. There is nowhere to run."
—Caroline Persaud, email to members,
Goodenough College, 17 January 2011

The path pools unlikely bedfellows. International postgraduates from Goodenough College, like myself, brush against well-heeled locals, council flat tenants, parents shuffling to Coram's Bangladeshi drop-in, lost youth from abroad trying to find the Generator Hostel, undergraduates from an NYU residence, and students from the Kingsway Westminster College (when permitted by Camden's anti-social behaviour curfew for the under 16s).

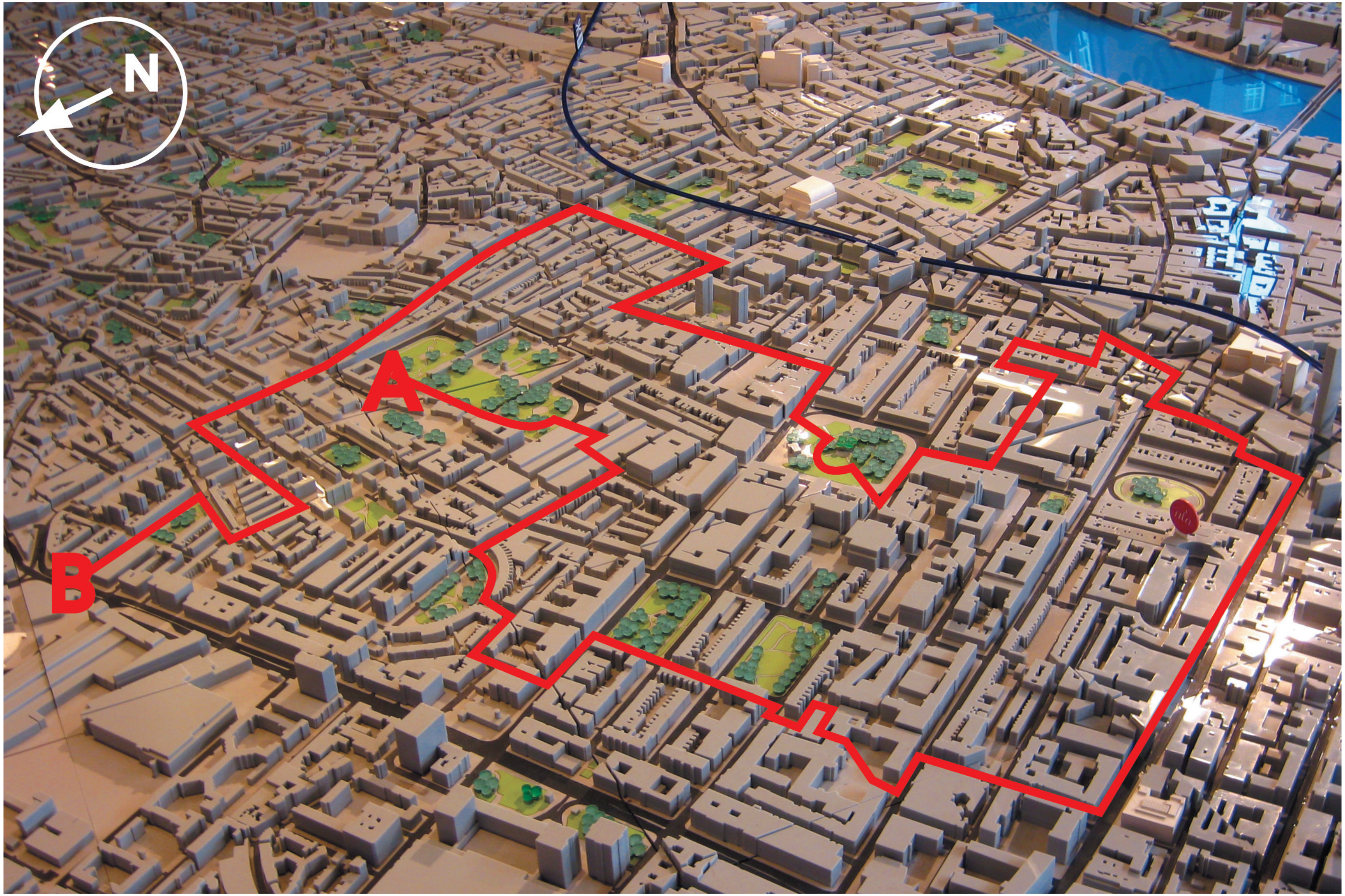
We emerge unscathed, at Mecklenburgh Square's twin: Brunswick Square. Laid out in the late 18th Century, these gardens were part of the original Foundling Hospital Estate and framed the Hospital grounds. Mecklenburgh Square is now under lock and key – sold to Goodenough College in the 1920s to help fund the Hospital's care of orphaned babies. Brunswick Square, on the other hand, is still open for lunching employees, smoking teenagers, laughing students, walking dogs.

The majority of Camden's population are long-term residents – a third are owner-occupiers and a similar proportion live in social housing. However a third of Camden's population either moves to the borough or leaves it every year, due in the most part to one of the largest student populations of any London borough. The student population also contributes to the high proportion of twenty and thirty-somethings, and one of the smallest older populations of any London borough, albeit growing rapidly.

Camden's population is highly ethnically diverse with larger Bangladeshi, Somali and 'White other' (from countries such as Australia, France, USA, Italy and Poland) populations than elsewhere in London.

At £33,000 the median household income in Camden is almost identical to London as a whole. Within Camden it ranges from £26,000 in St Pancras and Somers Town, which is poorer than the poorest London borough, Newham, to £45,000 in Frognal and Fitzjohns which is as wealthy as the richest, Richmond-upon-Thames and the City of London.

– Camden Plan 2012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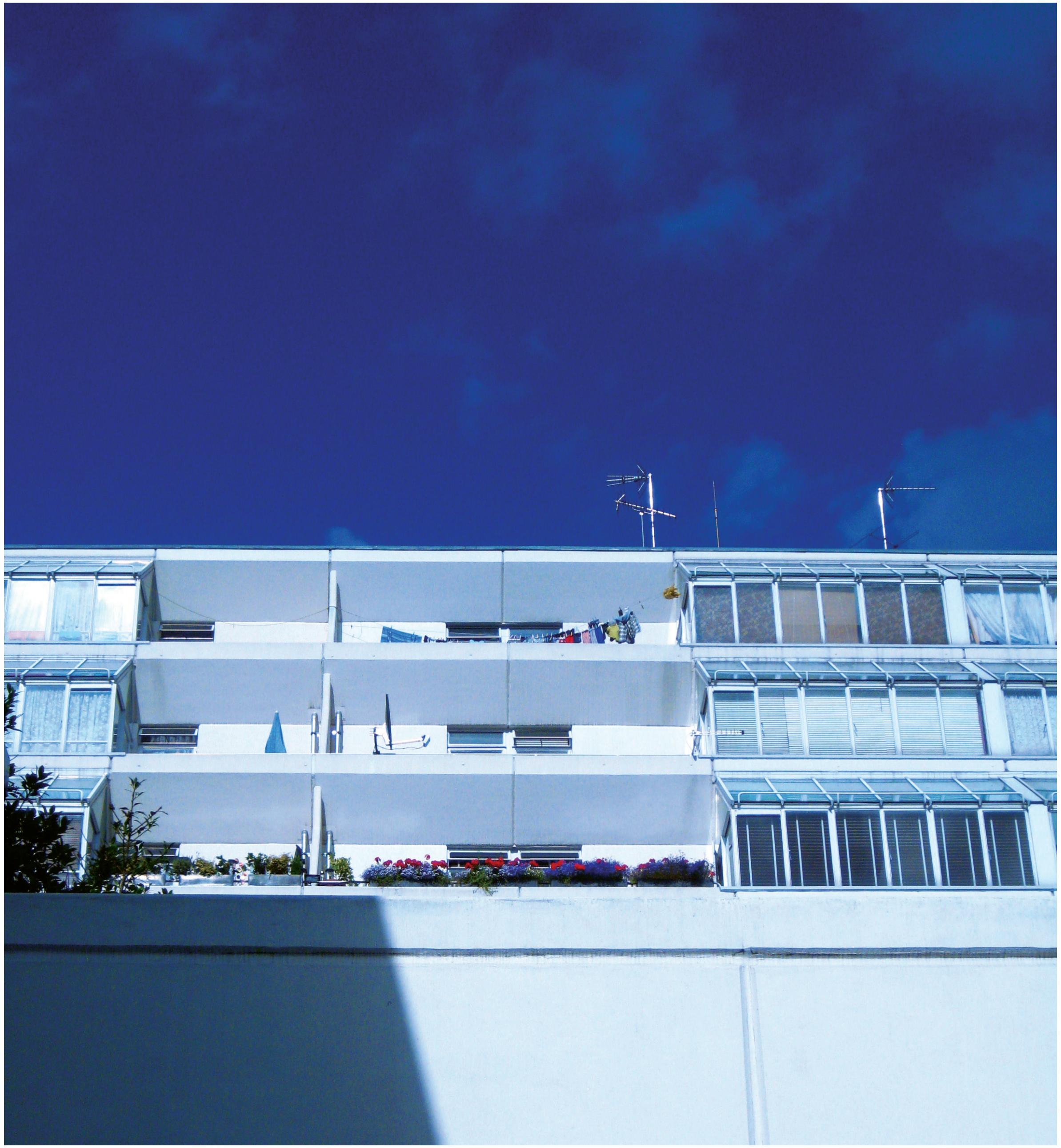
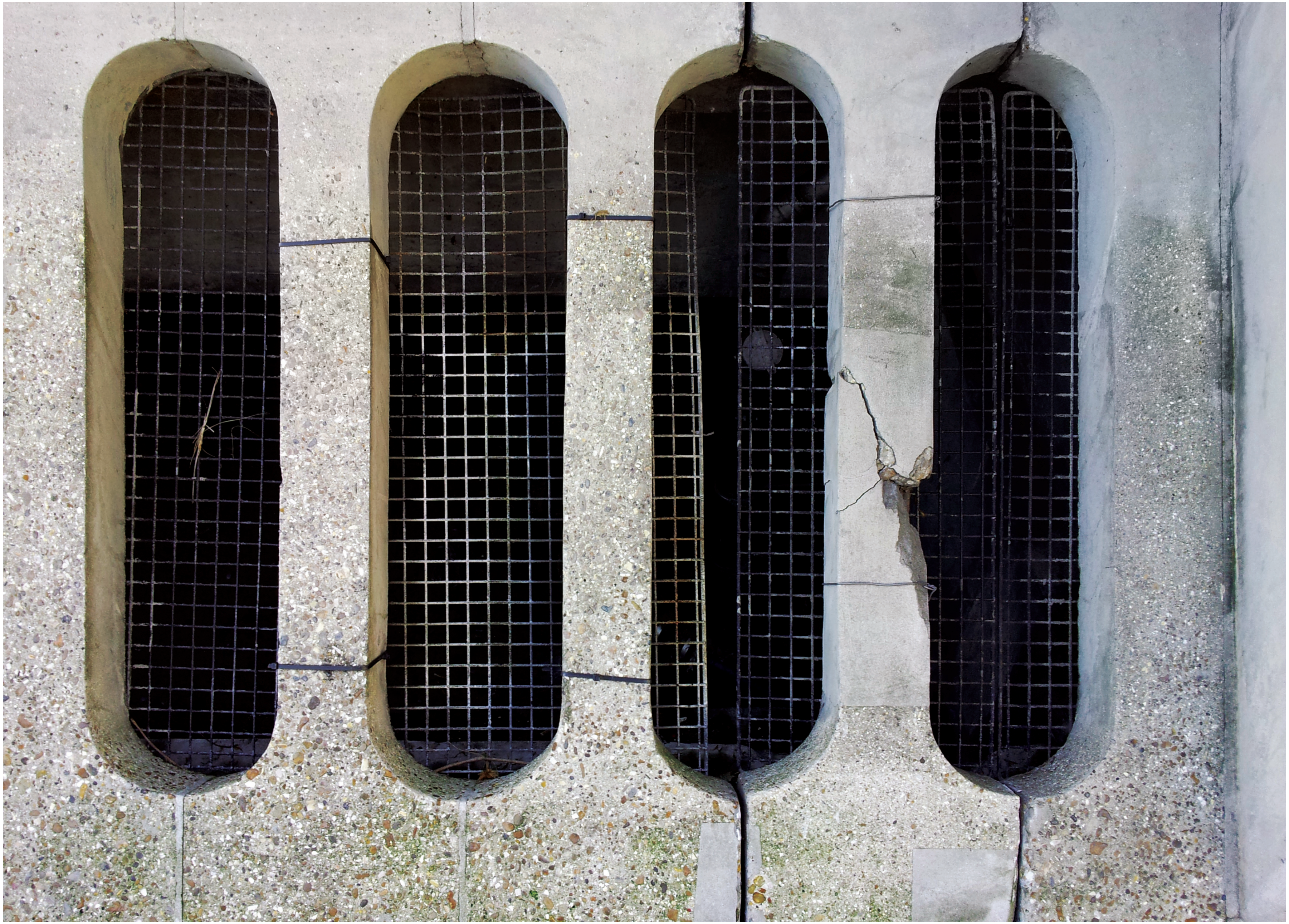
Up the steps by the Renoir Cinema into The Brunswick… NO skateboarding, NO cycling, NO ballgames, we're ordered by some bold pictograms. A public space, this is not. This grade II listed development once housed council flats, but was subject to Mrs Thatcher's Right to Buy scheme. Half of the units are still supported housing, while the other half is floating up in a real estate bubble. According to a local Councillor (interview, 20 July 2012) a unit bought for £30,000 in the 1970s now sells for £300,000. Others are optimistically listed around £850,000 (http://www.rightmove.co.uk, accessed 5 Dec 2014). All this brings with it grand shifts in the demographic composition.

It's an inward facing world – a place to eat, shop, live, do! – emblematic of the self-contained planning of the 1970s. It is modernist, brutally so, but like ad hoc forms, is honest and unapologetic about its heterogeneous repairs and obvious service towers. It is visibly made up at a macro and micro level. And on a sunny day, when the light hits the bleached stucco, you could almost imagine you were somewhere else.





"The Brunswick used to be useful", one local Councillor told me (interview, 20 July 2012). "The Brunswick used to be sad", said another (interview, 30 July 2012). Though before my time, I understand it used to feel more ad hoc, until a renovation and change in management around 2005. That's when "the marketing people took over" (ibid.). It has been passed through hands over time and jointly owned between the Camden Council and private developers – evolving ad hoc arrangements which have complicated management and practices of renovation (Melhuish 2006). The retail of The Brunswick is now dominated by chains, but brushes with ad hoc-ness on Saturdays, when food vendors – and the smell of deep-fried gyoza – settle in the plaza between 11am and 6pm. The sporadic installation of ping-pong tables are also part of The Brunswick's official efforts at spontaneity.

"Lots of footfall, not a lot of sales" (interview with Councillor, 30 July 2012). That's why the independents cannot survive. These shops are loss leaders for large brands, I'm told. What he means is someone will see a coat in the window of Hobbs here and then buy it on Regent Street. It's not about the sales, but about being here. And they're all here: Strada, Giraffe, Nando's, Joy, River Island, Holland and Barrett, Crush Juice Bar, Yo Sushi, Robert Dyas, William Hill, Space NK, Baby Gap, Superdrug, Waitrose, Boots... These chain stores may have stood shoulder to shoulder all the way to Euston Road had the University of London's Officers' Training Corps not dug in their heels to prevent it. Their building still sits at The Brunswick's northern edge. How many Pret a Mangers would there have been to go that distance?

The Foundling Estate – the area's original landlord – initially banned all shops, to maintain the tone of the area – "to preserve [the] street from the pollution of trade" (Olsen 1982: 123). However, in 1811, a flexible zoning policy was introduced, allowing retail on Marchmont and Kenton Streets. Here, residents could convert their parlours to shop fronts, but were restricted to the styles and architectural features set out in a design catalogue. Today's Marchmont Association (MA) has also created catalogues to encourage "good" design. Like the mid-19th Century catalogue, the Association looks to the past to recapture the essence of the Victorian local high-street. The history of the street is its unifying force, an Association representative told me. No wonder their embrace of history is so aggressively affectionate – implementing their own plaque program and encouraging historicist facades on newer buildings.

Marchmont is a meeting spot – of people and places. It is the official dividing line between King's Cross and Bloomsbury and was the division of St George's Bloomsbury and St Pancras parishes before the borough of Camden was created in 1965. Like a lot of the neighbourhood, and despite the efforts of the MA, it's a mix of this and that. But it's buzzy along this nowhere strip and only getting more hip. As we wander along, our eyes float over surfaces, snagged every so often by ordinary and extraordinary text. These stretches of signage begin to blur.

Top-ups, Ice Cream, Loading only, News & Mags, Moneygram, Leyland, Dulux, SHEETMATERIALS, BRASSWARE, Win your Wildest Dreams, International Calls from ½p / minute, LIVE travel update, Gino Gents, Ladies & Gents, Open, CA-D Mon – Fri 8:30 am - 6:30 pm, Full English Breakfast, Coffee!, SET DINNER three courses from £7.80, Motijheel Tandoori, John Street, Bloomsbury, 6 bedrooms, 4 receptions, 4 bathrooms, £4,000,000, Under offer, Organic Meals, Fair Trade Drinks, Bureau Change 0% commission, Take away service is available, Free Wi-Fi, Sponsored by Addison Lee, Pay Here, EAT AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE, Curtain Cleaning, The Bangladeshi Families Project, Adance Warning Parking Suspension, Cards & Wrap, To Let, Student Discount 10%, Mr Muscle, Stationery, Value Pack, OPEN 24H, £10 free credit, Special Offers, Wiseman estates, Tourist & Household Goods, Cooltone, London, Closing Down SALE, Triple Rollover Play Here!, Sir William Empson, Counting calories is easy when you can stop at 8, Buy this poster here, Do we still want the monarchy?, Food Hygiene Rating – 4, XLight CPL unwanted hair, Halal, Call the world f or less, Good girls go to Heaven, Bad girls go to LONDON, Queer Voices, James Dean, Natures du Monde, Freshly Baked, No smoking, Keep Calm and Carry On, Coffee Bar, Focaccia Ciabatta, This machine will charge you £1.75 for cash withdrawals, Laundrette, Life Lessons from Kierkegaard, Tradesmen entrance, Try our delicious SALT BEEF, Student Discounts, L'Oréal, Primi, Secondi, Dolci.


78
LAUNDRETTE
MOREISH Café Deli
76
MARCHMONT STREET WC1
TO LET

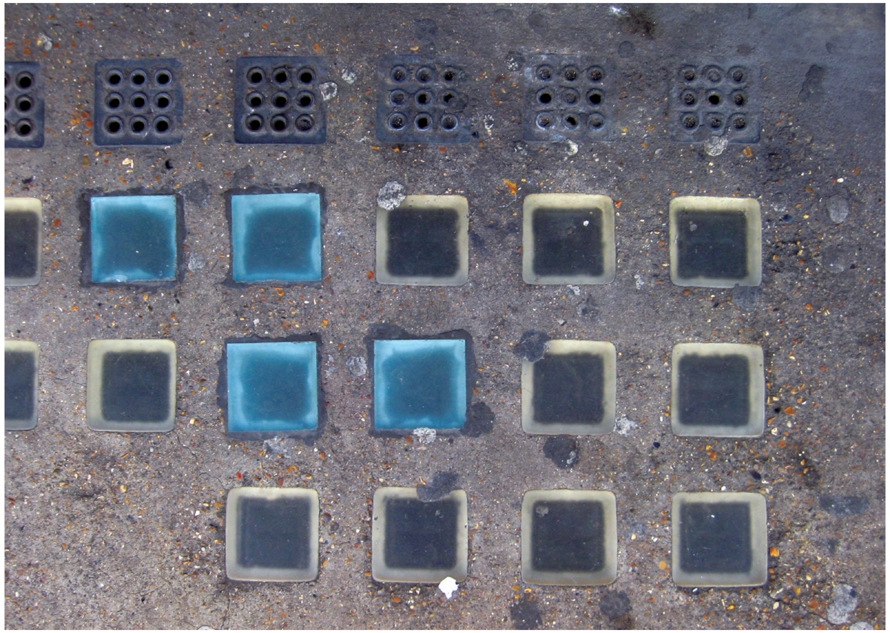
We continue by sweeping up Cartwright Gardens, a respectable address: on the left, Regency elegance, delicate fan lights, and intricate mosaic steps, on the right, private gardens and tennis courts. It is now occupied by a University of London residential hall and hotels catering to a range of budgets.

> Avoid avoid avoid
>
> I've been meaning to write this review for months and never got around to it. What usually happens after a bad experience is that unless you write something straightaway you let it go. However my blood stil [sic] heats considerably when I think of this place! My wife, daughter and I stayed here last May and paid £210 for an ensuite room! What qualified it for "ensuite" was a bathroom removed from a dodgy caravan and placed in the corner of an already cramped bedroom. No lift of course and the stairs are narrow and steep. How this place even got recognition from the relevant authority to call itself a "hotel" is a mystery.
>
> If stuck buy a sleeping bag and settle down under a bush in Hyde Park where I guarantee you will be a lot more comfortable!
>
> Stayed May 2012, travelled with family
>
> – Trip Advisor, reviewed 28 November 2012 by David K., http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/

As we walk, our feet shift over a mix of uneven pavers. There's a particular echoing timbre as the surface of one stone seesaws against its neighbour. York sandstone, original to Georgian London, is nestled against granite setts from Cornwall. Neither is local. The dazzling Wisteria before us on Burton Street is also from elsewhere. No blooms today, but the trunk – strikingly thick and knotted – grips the wrought iron balcony with such might that it damages its own bark. "I'm not going anywhere," it seems to say. From here and there, the materials at this corner shift, buzz, leak, and stir. And at the Libraire de Maghreb next door, we read:

> "VOUS Y TROUVEREZ L'INTROUVABLE... Fondée en 1987. Editeur, expert en estimations et fournisseur de livres neufs, rares et épuisés sur le Maghreb, l'Islam, le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique."

Across to Woburn Walk, where a planned Regency parade of shops with rooms above delights – the bay-windowed shop fronts provide ideal window shopping and stages for display. There is a balance to the Walk and great diversity of presentation approaches to the same bay windows.



PEDESTRIAN
ECCLES UK FOUNDRIES FE LTD F2


CITY OF WESTMINSTER
WESTMINSTER
CITY OF


for less


Bourhan Basma


WOBURN TANDOORI
WOBURN TANDOORI
INDIAN RESTAURANT
FULLY LICENSED
TAKE AWAY SERVICE
MENU
CLOSED
TAKEAWAY
HOT MEALS
2 COURSE
SET-MEAL
£10


GREENWOOD
Letting Agents
Residential Sales
Lettings and
Management
Commercial Sales
Lettings and
Management
Mortgage Advice
by Appointment
CLOSED


Clearly Destiny
Readings
Tarot £30
Spiritual £20
Psychic Portrait £30
FREE EVENT
MONDAY 7-9
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PSYCHIC AND A MEDIUM

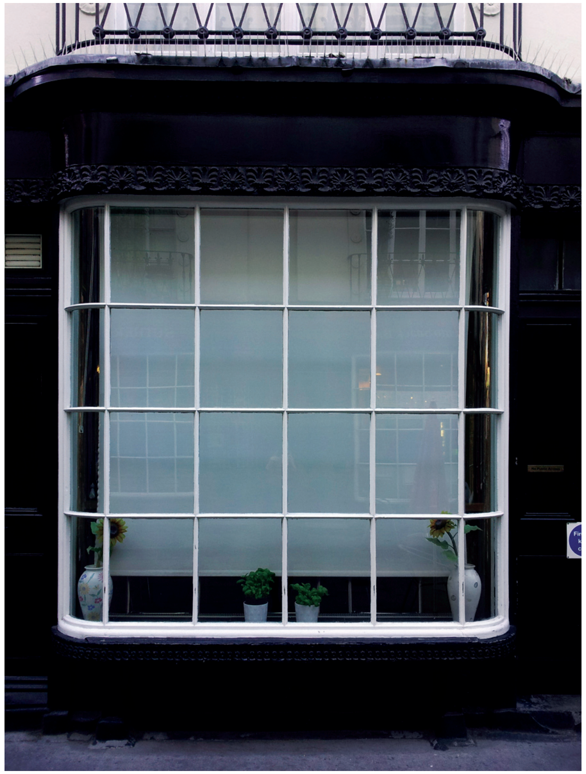

Halfpenny
LONDON


Sorrento Snack Bar
OPEN

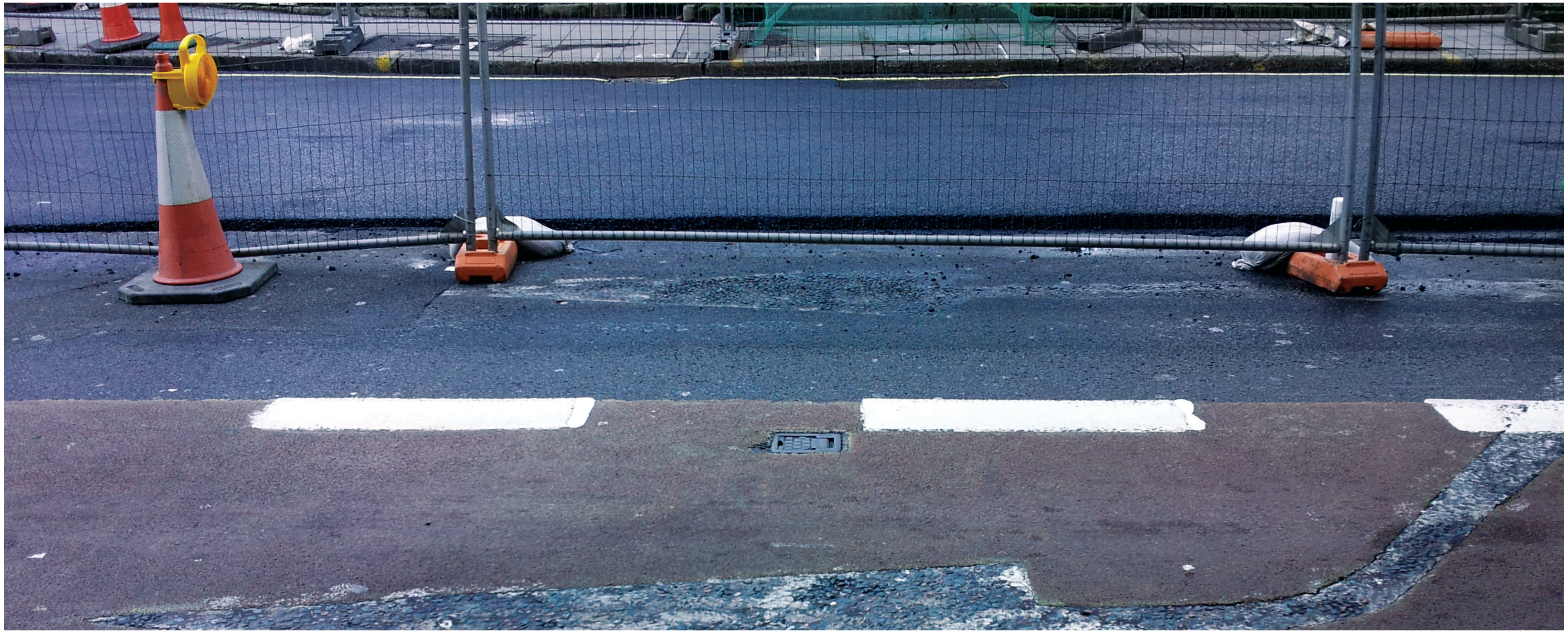

SUTHERLAND'S


P.J.MURRAY
Stationery
Confectionery
Lyca mobile
Stationery
Lyca mobile
I ❤ LONDON
EL PAIS


CHIVES
Mini Breakfast Offers



S'TRIM
COIFFURE



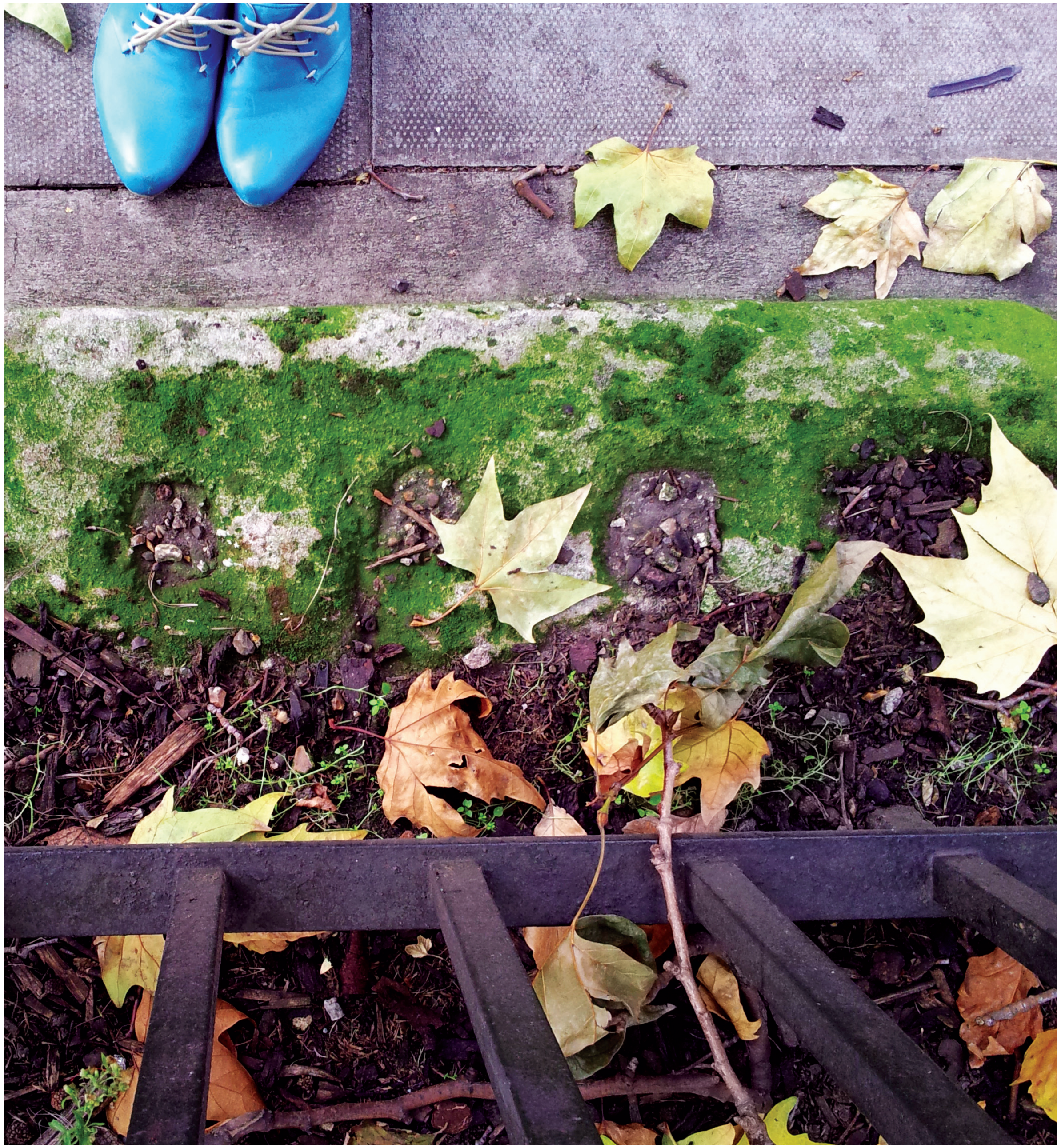
We emerge on Upper Woburn Place, thunderous with tour buses and taxis entering and leaving the congestion zone along this main arterial road. The din is coated by the low hum of a steamroller, slowly smoothening out a new layer of lustrous thick asphalt. With one lane complete, the hodgepodge of the other is starker. Decades of roadwork and numerous utilities companies carve into the road and pavement, together creating a haphazard bricolage on the landscape. Statutory undertakers – as they are referred to officially – leave scars of essential works patched with bituminous bound materials.

Moving south, we pass in front of the British Medical Association building. Unlike the unfinished carvings out back, its public façade is complete; a masterpiece, some would say. Built originally for the Theosophical Society by Edwin Lutyens, "Britain's most important architect," its Baroque Revival style looks to Christopher Wren's Hampton Court. In London and away, Lutyens' architecture nods to here, there, and then. As the architect behind New Delhi – Lutyens' Delhi – and the Viceroy's House (now called Rashtrapati Bhavan), he borrowed from local and colonial styles. His understudy, Herbert Baker, also famously mixed "ethnic" motifs with English traditions for colonial buildings: India House, Aldwych, South Africa House, and Trafalgar Square. A colonial architect par excellence? On the BMA building, the mix relates to both Lutyens' own hybrid interests and to decades of more recent work by various builders and architects.

Across the street in Tavistock Square, some things are more deliberately connected with other times and places. It's a strange coming together of memorials. A cherry tree, planted in 1967, commemorates the Hiroshima bombing victims. Another memorial, this one to conscientious objectors, has held space here since 1995. And there this statue of Mahatma Ghandi has been sitting in full lotus since 1968. He faces the site of the 7/7 bombing on the number 30 bus.

Aside from British physicians, the BMA building is occupied by layers of moss. Its surface shows the traces of decades of rain water – washed, not cleaned. Across the busy road, moss creeps through the cracks in the concrete pavers at the edge of the Square, and around the cavities where iron fencing once stood, before it was removed to make weapons in the 1940s. Though some say these fences were ultimately tossed into the Thames, their uncanny footprints are another peculiar memorial to global conflict and to a time when London's squares were open all hours.

A glove on a fence post waves us past Tavistock Square towards Endsleigh Place, alongside thresholds bricked-up by owners to avoid the window tax. Across from Gordon Square, where tree roots force through the concrete walls, a strip of terraced houses turned UCL offices stand in Italianate style. The mid-19th century façade does look dignified, but isn't fashioned of stone, as it appears. Instead its brick is covered with render and scored creating a stone veneer.



There are scores of students around. They not only study here – at Senate House, University of College London (UCL), Birkbeck, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and the Institute of Education – but many live in the neighbourhood too. Over 10,250 higher education students reside in Camden, south of the Euston Road (Camden 2014). We are swept up in their movements and by the sounds of mother tongues from here and there. No wonder – just over a quarter of London students are international (UKCISA 2014).

We're funnelled into the UCL compound, then up a worn banister. We pass tourists taking photos of an embalmed Jeremy Bentham and a Black Bloomsbury exhibition. Across Gower Street, the cruciform building, once the University College Hospital, is now used as a library. Its ornate hairpin and picket fence is used as a bin. A foil peanut package is carefully folding in half twice and rolled up to slip in the decorative ironwork. Elsewhere, a brown paper McDonald's bag is tightly squeezed to fit next to the curve of the scrolls. No wonder: there's no real bin in sight until we arrive at Tottenham Court Road. Here, a bin is artfully overflowing like a participatory time-based sculpture: created by individuals carefully balancing a paper coffee cup here, a cellophane sandwich wrapper there, then a browning apple core and empty soda can. An inadvertent social artwork bequeathed by the city? Was this ad hoc assemblage facilitated by an errant bin collector perhaps?

Look around. Here is the bustle. Here are the shops. We head south against the busy traffic and the office workers heading up towards the transit hubs and new office blocks on Euston Road – traffic which will be slowed considerably when future plans reduce it to bus and bike traffic. Today, two scales of development govern these blocks – large retailers, predominantly selling furniture, on the east side and smaller shops with more independents present on the west. Distinctive lamp standards hint at the street's long commercial history: as London's leading shopping street for home furnishings in the late 19th century, it was one of the first to be provided electric light in 1892 (Camden History Society 1997: 34). A-boards now dot the pavement and signs hang overheard. A block north or so a life-sized wooden Scottish Highlander once stood to make a Tobacconist's shop visible in space in a similar way. A comparable one still stands in Covent Garden, with a sign reading:

> The figure of a Highlander holding a flask of snuff was an indication that the shop stocked Scottish snuff. The 18th century laws which forbade the use of overhead

> projecting signs because of the danger presented to passing traffic left tobacco traders unaffected as their traditional emblems, carved figures, stood at the door entrance. The Highlander went out of regular use as a sign in about 1845.

Today other forms dot the pavement too. Eleven kiosks mark the stretch between the Euston Road and Oxford Street, all on this western side, save for a few on the eastern side outside of the Tottenham Court Road tube station. "It's all about the foot traffic," I was told by a trader when enquiring about the kiosks' locations (field notes, 26 June 2012). On the west side, a direct path follows from Warren Street Station to Goodge Street Station and down towards Oxford Street. It is not accidental then that this path meets all three of the kiosks he manages. "If I don't get them at the first one," he jests, "I'll get them by the third".

We could do a lot as we swing between the kiosks on this street: buy convenience foods, unlock a mobile phone, get newspapers, repair shoes, buy sweets, choose flowers, and peruse luggage… all without leaving the pavement. The kiosks are part of the animation of the strip. Like Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street," they watch and listen, working together with the other smaller businesses on the strip to curb theft and act as community stewards. These traders build communities with the other small retailers on the street, but have little interaction with the larger retailers like Heal's, for example, despite their inclusion under the The Fitzrovia Partnership umbrella.

Created in 2012, the Business Improvement District (BID) has been working to enhance the commercial environment. Unlike inMidtown – the BID covering Bloomsbury, Holborn, and St Giles, to the southwest of the neighbourhood – the Fitzrovia Partnership does not fly branded banners. We can see that its material presence

is more muted. In fact, its presence is felt perhaps more in what's not here, as a result of the BID Ambassadors' work to clamp down on illegal street trading activities, busking and noise pollution, litter, graffiti and fly posting, prostitute cards in telephone boxes, damage to street furniture, and anti-social behaviour (http://fitzroviapartnership.com/services/ambassadors).

A quick look down Store Street is met with leafy trees, espresso-sipping hipsters, and a row of suspended signs that still looks fresh. Between 2010 and 2012, the Bedford Estate – Bloomsbury's biggest landlord – "regenerated Store Street to create a vibrant village high street, full of independent retail shops, cafes and restaurants" (http://www.bedfordestates.com/the-estate/today/). Materially it has been groomed: shop fronts have been replaced and signage harmonised among the fourteen commercial units. This mixed-use regeneration means, "it's all happening on Store Street, Bloomsbury!" at least according to the developers and architects Garnett+Partners LLP, whose chests must puff while mentioning their Camden Design Awards acknowledgement. The "village-style high street" has been curated as a "boutique retail destination with a new brand identity" (http://www.redcowcreative.com/what-we-do/branding-identity/store-street/). Under the ownership of the Bedford Estate, this street has long been managed, but the cohesion of the vision – of the brand and built environment – is new. Like The Brunswick, there may be no returning to ad hoc-ness here.


13
STORE ST. ESPRESSO
Store St. Espresso
ESTATE AGENT
HURFORD SALVI CARR
BIKE SHOP
printing centre
DECADENCE
TO LET

We continue down to lower Tottenham Court Road, where electronic shops outnumber espresso bars, and most everything else. Though many have closed in recent years, this has been a centre of electronic retailing since WWII. Everything is so cheap amidst these economies of agglomeration. And it feels a little on the sly.

He tells me of the scam artists lurking around the computer shops. Here, crooks buy shiny new laptops and offer them outside the shop at half price. The deal is too good to be true. Together the conman and sucker go to the cash point. When the poor dupe turns his back to attend to his transaction, the bag with the laptop is switched with an empty one. "They're my bags," admits a local shopkeeper, shaking his head. He's troubled that his goods are involved in such criminality. Is he complicit in the crime? But he cannot afford to refuse the sale.

– Field notes, 17 August 2012

At the Tottenham Court Road tube station a swirl of activity is captured in the shimmering "We Will Rock You" marquee of the Dominion Theatre. There is a small cluster of kiosks here, taking advantage of the wide pavements and pedestrian traffic from the station. Decorative bollards dot the corners, with the cables sneaking out their backs. This piece of street furniture disguises its use as the kiosks' source of power.

We can see the cranes of the Crossrail project looming over the kiosks. They are building momentum in the neighbourhood. The £1bn investment will accommodate the 102,000 daily passengers who will jump on board in 2018 and paves the way for private retail development above ground (http://www.crossrail.co.uk/). This project is inspiring others. Soon the grade II listed Centre Point tower will see redevelopment as well, with a conversion to residential use and the development of a new retail and public space (http://www.centrepointlondon.com). We can see that Oxford Street still hosts an array of marginalised businesses – discount Italian menswear, cheap and cheerful take-away noodles, souvenir shops with currency exchange desks and piercing studios in the basement – but it's changing. For instance, with the station redevelopment came Primark's fast-fashion frenzy.

"They are selling gloves 2 for £1. I sell them for £2 each. And that's cheap! I don't know, how can I compete?"

– Field notes, 7 November 2012


I LONDON
I LONDON
LONDON
ENGLAND
COCAINE & Caviar
COCAINE & Caviar
MUNICH
10
ROBBEN
ROONEY
10
WALCOTT
14
SOLDADO
9
Mobile Phones
Cracked Screens
Repaired Here
0%
COMMISSION
BUREAU DE CHANGE
WE BUY
USD $
EUR €
CHF
JPY ¥
AUD


5T
Zone
ENDS
£3.99


Coca-Cola
worldwide partner
Lebara mobile
NEWS VENDOR KIOSK
Newspapers, Magazines, Tobacco, Cold Drinks
Sweets, Crisps, International Phone Cards
Coca-Cola
COLD DRINKS
SWEETS
CRISPS
CIGARETTES
&
TOBACCO
NEWSPAPERS
MAGAZINES
PHONE CARDS
LONDON MAPS
STAMPS
TELEPHONE
TELEPHONE
CAMFAUD


Coke
BURGERS
MENU
EXCELLENT NATURAL FOODS
TO TAKE AWAY

We walk east. Here, south of the British Museum, we notice there are surprisingly few chains. A cluster of tourist shops sells the timeworn Diana head postcard and Baby George cards too, but also "antiquities", Harris Tweed waistcoats, and locally designed wood block prints. We disappear in the crowds of tourists getting off buses and, as a result, can escape behind our cameras, to take pictures of tourists taking pictures of the souvenirs they covet. But the hum is emanating from the British Museum to the north, a temple for colonial exploits and cabinets of curiosities. There's no time for the Elgin Marbles today. We glide through Foster's Great Court, dazzling even on a cloudy day, past the totem poles from British Columbia and out the back door.

We exit with the museum's noble lions at our backs. They sniff towards the "Yam – Plantain Stew" and "Jumbo Hot Dogs" of Delia's Kitchen Afrika. Delia's generators purr. Look left past the construction of the museum's new conservation wing towards the site of Royal Holloway's Landscape Surgery, my fortnightly research group: Bedford Square (c. 1775).

> It remains without any doubt the most handsome of London squares, partly because it is preserved completely on all sides. The architect was probably Leverton, who built for himself No. 1, a little different from the others with a lovely entrance and oval staircase. The other houses have entrances with the doors flanked by window slits so as to make a tripartite pattern and surrounds of Coade stone with intermittent vermiculated rustication and bearded faces on the keystones. Each side of the square is treated as a whole. (Pevsner, 1952: 216)

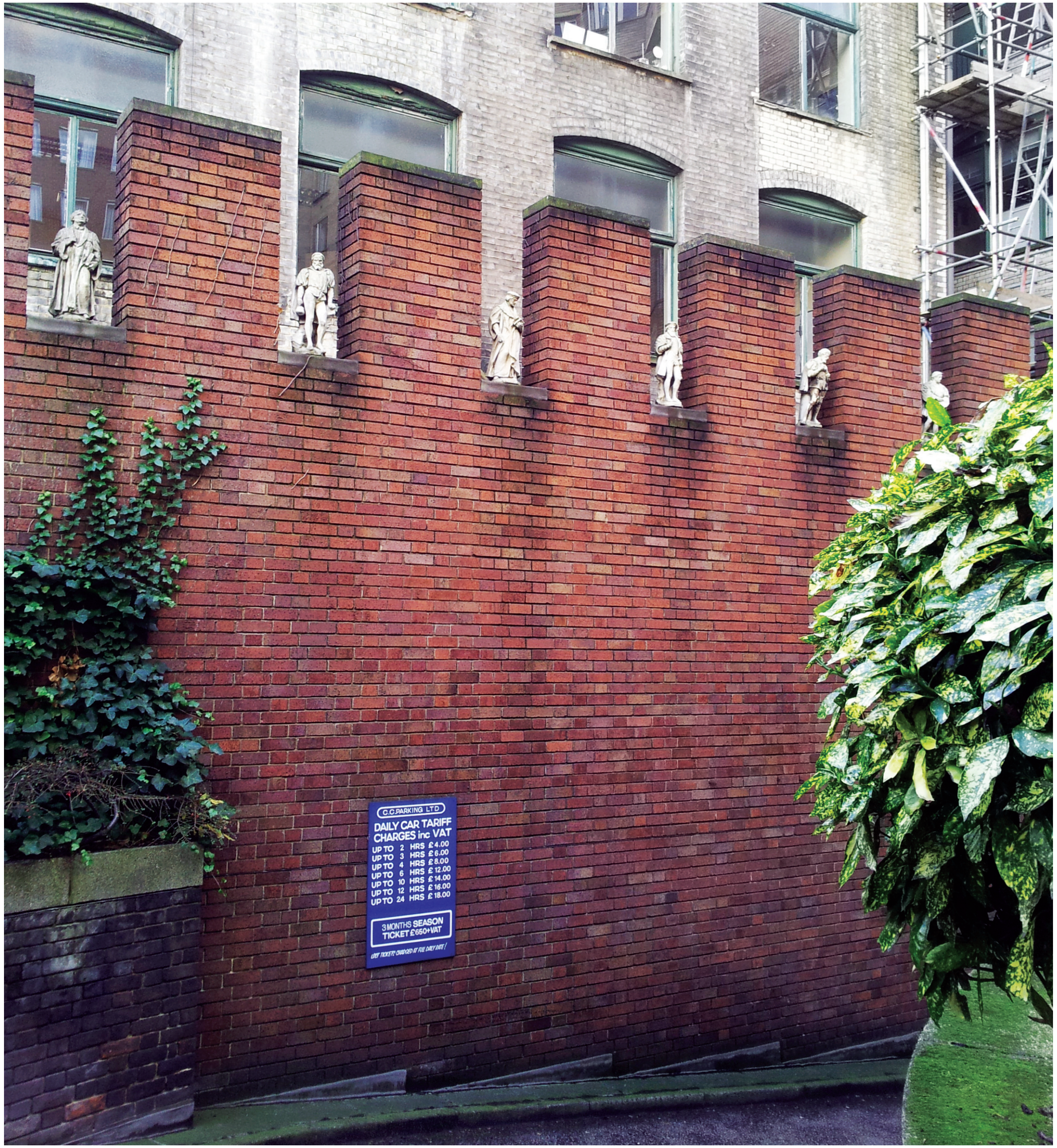
Though it still looks full of "gentlemen's private residences," when gentlemen started moving to the country in the late 19th century and the Bedford estate was forced to allow commercial business onto the Square, strict design policy limited any "show of business" to "a neat brass plate beside the front door" (Olsen 1982: 116).

In front of us towers the centrepiece of the University of London. Architect Charles Holden promised Senate House would "appear with quiet insistence" (Boyd 2008: 259). The planes of concrete, Cornish granite and Portland stone are resolute. London's first skyscraper has been reimagined through time to house the Ministry of Information through WWII, Orwell's Ministry of Truth, and soon as a new home for SOAS in the northern block. Breezing through the Crush Hall, we walk towards Russell Square. Here stands one of London's last Grade II listed cabman's shelters. For a time it offered Thai take-away to all, but shepherd's pie today.

> Only a dozen or so of these green gems remain. They're worth searching out, because their appearance – a cross between a cricket pavilion and a large garden shed – serves to underscore that the cab trade pre-existed the modern city. The proviso laid down by the Metropolitan Police that, as these shelters were situated on the public highway, they could be no larger than a horse and cart. This has given them their characteristic style. [...] The whole shelter is painted the distinctive Dulux Buckingham Paradise 1 Green.
>
> The rules governing the use of shelters are as follows:
>
> 1. This Shelter is the property of the Fund and is for the use of CABDRIVERS only.
> 2. The Drivers of the FIRST TWO CABS on the rank are reminded that by law they have to be with their cabs.
> 3. Card playing, betting or gambling is STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.
> 4. No notices are to be placed in this Shelter without the permission of the Committee.
> 5. A Tariff of priced is to be regularly exhibited in the Shelter.
> 6. The Shelter is to be kept open for service during the hours set out in the Notice displayed in the Shelter.
> 7. The Attendant is responsible for seeing that the above regulations are strictly carried out.
>
> — http://www.cabbieblog.com/green-cab-shelters/

Moving south on Southampton Row, we pass souvenir shops and restaurants that don't necessarily count on return customers. Educational institutions and hotels spill out onto the narrow pavement. Students on break from ESL class smoke and gossip in Spanish by shops selling hard luggage emblazoned with the Union Jack. Morphologically, the rhythm of the street is jarringly interrupted by the Imperial Hotel, rebuilt in the tumult of modernist planning of the 1960s. The Turkish baths, still advertised in carved marble on the pavement at the corner, were demolished along with the striking Victorian structure. The messiness of the past was a burden. Bigger, smoother, and bolder was better. The modernist honesty of construction and materials has a complicated relationship with the ad hoc. It does what it appears to do, in ad hoc fashion, but also streamlines disarray and heterogeneity. Nevertheless, some signs remain of what was here before. The bath's statuettes now line the ramp to the underground car park.

After a walk through Cosmo Place, we arrive at Queen's Square. Here, Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath were married at St George the Martyr and William Morris' Art Workers' Guild was established – a place that has long celebrated vernacular making and doing. There is still much being done here on Great Ormond Street, now behind scaffolding and clouds produced by



the cigarette smokers; the cluster of medical institutions is enjoying a facelift.

At Lamb's Conduit, we look north towards Coram's Fields, taking in the symmetry of the colonnaded Georgian buildings which frame the stone platform for abandoned foundlings. "No unaccompanied adults", we're told. It's not for us today.

From here, the street has a community and stylish feel. Takeaway lunches made through the food waste reduction program at the local People's Supermarket fuel employees of fashionable menswear boutiques and pop-up shops. The concentration of these high-end businesses would only be possible in a city like London, yet there's a sleepy small town feeling on this stretch. The retailers tell us they aren't making a business with passers-by. For some, shops below ensure offices can remain above. For others, online sales pay the rent. Indeed tenants of the adjacent council flats and students alike gape at prices.

Theobald's feels like an edge: the concentration of bus routes creates a red steel wall, the cars move a little too fast, the street is too wide for a strong relationship between this side and that; the shops lack coherence Here we find some relics. The yellow and wood panelling in the interior of Fryer's Delight, persists, for example, as do the faded newspaper clippings on its walls.


MILLMAN COURT


Lycamobile
S S NEWS
128
Lycamobile
Call the world for less
lycamobile
Lycamobile
lycamobile
UNLIMITED FREE CALLS
£10 Free Credit
VALUE PACK
3000 minut za darmo
toggle
FREE incoming calls while roaming in 100+ countries

Were it not for the sound of Eastern European voices behind the counter, we could be in the 1950s. The strip also houses the kiosk where I spent time with Daleel. It used to be a newsagent. Daleel says the only news they have on offer is bad news now. It is a place where we mostly sat and waited, watching the locals move by.

Daleel spits when he sees the vagrant brothers. "I hate these sorts of people," he says, after they leave with their weathered Tesco bags, still crammed with brand new make-up and electronics. During their presentation, like magic, the typical glossiness of the objects is seemingly transformed – vanished – in their worn hands. No, we're not buying, we say. One time, someone put a piece of gold in their cup, which they sold for £300. A day to celebrate. They sat on the pavement across from our kiosk for most of an afternoon – drinking cans of beer, eating crisps, and chocolate bars. It was a great day for them, and a good day for us.
– Field notes, 24 August 2012

I decided to try this place again. The more London gentrifies and the fancier it becomes, the more I want parts of its crumbled, bedraggled past to remain and keep it all a bit real. Nothing has changed inside Fryer's Delight in the two and a half years since I set foot in here. Which is no surprise as it might not have changed since before I was born.
– Reviewed 27 March 2014 by Walter W., http://www.yelp.co.uk

We shuffle along to Gray's Inn Road where lawyers from the Inn itself queue out the doors of cafés and sandwich shops, ready to bring their take-away back to the grass. As we join the migration northwards, a medley of buildings greets us:

Victorian public house, four-storeys in stock brick with cast stone detailing and brightly painted relief statue of a horse | non-descript brick building with stucco window surrounds, grocer at ground floor | contemporary flat development under construction | large six-storey Victorian block of flats with mannerist terracotta ornament, massage parlour and leathergoods shop with original fascia elements | mid-20th century quasi terrace brick building, four storeys with mansard roof with a bicycle shop taking up width of three retail units | early 20th century Arts & Crafts inspired commercial building in brick, stone, and roughcast with curved bow windows | Georgian terrace housing in brick with moulded stucco architraves, parapet roof, Lebanese restaurant | interwar former printer's shop, plain elevation in brick and stone | plain but charming four-storey building with chamfered façade, redbrick trim and mansard roof | string of very large asymmetric Victorian flat blocks, seven and eight storeys, in Dutch revivalist style in red brick with stone dressings, large gables and very animated roofscape, diversity of retail units at ground level | Mid-19th century traditional London terrace in stock brick with blind arches, flat gauged arches to window heads, sash windows, some original fascia details above the Food Bazaar | large contemporary office block, eight storeys with expansive glazed facade, very light and airy | Regency terraced houses, three storeys with mansard roof, stock brick with blind arches, one still retaining its original residential entrance and others with retail at ground floor | colossal 1980s office block, seven storeys, very heavy presence and vast blank voids on the street | Attractive late 19th century four-storey redbrick building with bright mortar, gauged and rubbed brickwork and high quality terracotta ornament | postwar building in brick and pale green tilework with large metal casement windows | row of handsome Regency terraces, three storey plus attic in stock brick with classical detail and patterned fanlights| large postmodern office block, probably 1980s, with abstract sculptural façade in stone, metal and glass | derelict single-storey building with stucco rusticated façade painted purple, former home of mattress makers | five-storey postwar residential block with Sicilian restaurant | 19th century terraces with parapet roofs and sash windows| 1980s residential development with modern mansard roof | late 20th century four-storey brick building used by St Mungo's | completely rendered 19th century four-storey building with curved bow window and Gibbs surround to entrance | Blue Lion public house, mixture of redbrick, terracotta and pantiles | terrace with grocer at ground floor | Regency terrace painted brilliant white with piano shop | terrace house with walkup entrance and Italianate detail, heavy cornice

Crossing Guildford Street sees us leaving Holborn and Covent Garden and re-entering the ward of King's Cross. We stumble upon another constellation of ad hoc shops – three corner shops within two blocks, each specialising in different things. The students of Westminster Kingsway College and the density of residents provide good business for all. Many residents come to the shops from the west, where a concentration of modernist blocks signals the presence of a housing estate. The estate's erratically locked gates interrupt the flow of this area of the city, and periodically frustrate those looking for a shortcut to King's Cross station. But it also slows the pace along Cromer Street, a commercial strip and Bangladeshi community hub.

"Where do you live?" I'm asked. "Bloomsbury," I tend to say. My building is always promoted as a Bloomsbury address – conjuring the literary lyricism of Virginia Woolf and tousled beards of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Politically, it finds itself nested in the ward of King's Cross, just south of the nine six-storey slabs of Council units. It's no surprise that practiced geographical parlance is at odds with current political boundaries. The imprecision may also speak to the storied past of King's Cross.

Characterised by disorder, decay, abjection, industry, dirt, and dust, the area has suffered from a long-term identity crisis and heard various promises of improvement through time (Campkin 2004). But this time, it's serious. The "Cinderella district, shunned by big business" is being transformed (Edwards 2010: 189), all 67 acres. Look, it is transforming before us. "The great railway give-away" it was called by the Guardian (1 March 1996, cited in Holgersen & Haarstad 2009), when the London and Continental Railways (LCR) won the Chunnel bid and were given the land (worth an estimated £5.7 billion) instead of the usual government subsidies (Holgersen & Haarstad 2009). A complicated assemblage of actors has tried to steer the unwieldy "ownership vehicle" composed of the LCR (35%), Exel (15%), and Argent (50%). The King's Cross Railway Lands Group, Cally Rail Group, King's Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee, Regents Canal Network, the Green Party, and the Islington Bangladeshi Association: despite consultation, these groups have been left wondering about their place and influence in the midst of business interests, growth, and competitiveness (Edwards 2010). As Battista et al. (2005: 442) write, "despite the brick dust and noise of heavy machinery, the whole area is taking on an air of future fortunes."

From the south side of the Euston Road, we see the cranes hanging over the stations, moving in slow motion, the redeveloped St Pancras Hotel, and the façade of King's Cross station, finally unobstructed for the first time since the 1970s. But there's the Euston Road. This psychological and material barrier is difficult to cross, even with the recent removal of fencing. Like the traffic streaming before us, the whole area is wrapped up in movement: the buses, the tube, King's Cross and St Pancras stations, Crossrail, the Channel Tunnel Railway Link, and the people too.

> King's Cross is a mixed use development. Offices, homes, shops, hotels, leisure and community facilities, music venues, galleries, bars and restaurants all have a place here. [...] But the mix at King's Cross isn't just about what goes on in the buildings. There's also a mix of people here, of built space and open space, of the old and the new. All these things go into making King's Cross a diverse, dynamic and successful community. A vibrant place that's alive with people seven days a week. [...] King's Cross is an inclusive and diverse community. A place for everyone.
>
> – http://www.kingscross.co.uk/the-mix

We are standing in the redevelopment, which promises itself to be "a vibrant and successful part of a world class city" (Battista et al. 2005: 433). But what is supplanted for this "vibrancy"? Long-time resident and artist Richard Wentworth posed this question in his local exhibition entitled "An area of outstanding unnatural beauty." In collaboration with Artangel, the work was


HOTEL
GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL
Coca-Cola
IS IT BIG?

established in an abandoned plumbing shop (see also Wentworth 2001). Were we walking by in 2002, we might have seen the low-key installation: some industrial objects, a shipping container with periscope, ping-pong tables, maps, films, and everyday things. Together they provided a place for people to consider the transforming relationships between the city and its meaning and what the rich everyday textures of the city can tell us about its history (Battista et al. 2005; Campkin 2004). Inspired by Wentworth's installation, the "pleasure of treasure" treasure/scavenger hunt similarly engaged locals in their own experiences of place, tracing histories, objects, and change through the neighbourhood (Battista et al. 2005). Both asked the public to encounter the area with fresh eyes.

"The changes feel apocalyptic" (Battista et al. 2005: 446). This is true in terms of both the noise we hear now and what is to come. It's currently the largest regeneration project in Europe, they say (Holgersen & Haarstad, 2009) – caffeinating the process of local gentrification. This place of rupturing newness signals the tour's end point.

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A whistle-stop tour presented through staccato neighbourhood snapshots highlights social and commercial heterogeneity, material presence and feeling, and ad hoc textures of place. Camden (2014: 1) rightly describes itself as "a borough of diversity and contrasts." This area is a confluence of bodies, uses, ideologies, materials. The city has long been discussed as a process of coming together: as a gathering process (Casey 1996), a cyborg (Gandy 2005; Swyngedouw 1996, 2006), an assemblage (Anderson & McFarlane 2011; Farıas & Bender 2009; McFarlane 2011). Places are assemblages of material, practice, and meaning (Cresswell 2014).

The neighbourhood, described here, is more than the sum of its material and immaterial parts: its Yorkstone pavers, traders, moss, conglomerates, parking restrictions, and empty coffee cups. The city collects things. Through the process, things come together and drift apart, territorialising and deterritorialising urban space (DeLanda 2006). Through its making and remaking, a city leaves open the possibilities for innovation and change (Jacobs 2012, citing Latour 2005). And so, despite the flash of mega-projects and local branding exercises, the material on the street shows an organic vernacular process. Cities are places in motion. The neighbourhood is transpiring in an ad hoc way.

Latham and McCormack (2004) write that the urban expresses a materiality that is emergent; it is both on-going and controlled, but without a central underlying structural logic. The notion of an urban assemblage captures the plurality of forces fuelling urban practice and transformation. Paraphrasing Ingold (2008: 1808), McFarlane (2011: 633) describes urbanism as a "sociomaterial achievement continuously remade through different encounters, labours, and mobilisations." Urban assemblages are lived. Like the shops, the neighbourhood is a product of daily labouring – of "tinkering and tweaking", repair, and maintenance (McFarlane 2011: 659, citing Dovey 2010 and Graham & Thrift 2007). Barry (2001: 211-212) sees assemblage as a mode of invention, where "what is inventive is not the novelty of artefacts and devices in themselves, but the novelty of the arrangements with other objects and activities within which artefacts and instruments are situated, and might be situated in the future". This brings an openness to the spontaneity and possibilities of the city. Seeing assemblage as an improvisation is also a constructive way to approach the shops. It harks back to an original use of the term by Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 406), who write that, "an assemblage [is] every constellation of singularities and traits deducted from the flow – selected, organized, stratified – in such a way as to converge artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention." It is the assemblage of the shops – and their relationship with the city – that I turn to now.

The shops

Like most of London, local ad hoc shops do not develop according to an ideology or high street plan, but proceed according to the everyday logics of the street, their variegated material landscapes, and routine practices of shop-keeping. As gleaned through some of the descriptions above, the shops have particular relationships with the street. Here, I describe these material and social relationships in a bit more detail. These shops are keyed into the rhythms and materials of the city. Indeed, attending to mutable local needs and urban change is essential to succeed.

His fruit stand outside the Tube station greets morning commuters as they surface into daylight. Plush imitation grass covers his folding wooden table. It flickers in the sun and breeze, making his produce pop into view. "…it looks natural, right? – like it's just been picked." The nectarines' blush and mangoes' flash of crimson are studies in colour theory against the emerald green of the turf. Complementary hues guide the weary eyes over the juicy flesh and around handmade signs: Peaches, 3 for £1-00; Sharon fruit 40p each. Fingers blindly grope for change. In clear plastic cups, geometric chunks of melon bathe in thick yogurt. The dusting of granola on top is beginning to sink and soften, but it's palatable yet. "It's all small purchases, for immediate consumption, you know? It's about the volume. It's numbers that make the day." Every day he sells out, except for the oranges maybe. And every morning he stocks up at Spitalfields or Covent Garden or Borough Market, and then chops some fruit in geometric chunks before the commuters surface again.

– Field notes, 20 June 2012

"Food & Wine" is just a start. Kitty litter, toothpicks, light bulbs, shoe polish, greeting cards, toothpaste, biro pens… and no shop adjacent the British Museum would pass up the souvenirs market. "Oh, we definitely need the tourists. But they're becoming tight-fisted. They used to come to spend £30, £50, £100 on things as gifts for people. Now they spend a long time picking out one cheap item for themselves. But we sell them cheaper than the other shops. Tourists come first for sandwiches and water. They see our souvenirs. They're just looking. But they return when they see the cost in other shops." Like the intensive use of the shop floor, souvenir objects maximise their surface area. Here, £4.49 buys a ceramic figurine small enough to slip in a pocket, but large enough to depict the London Eye, a route master, Big Ben, Tower Bridge, a red phone booth, and St Paul's Cathedral, ordered – somewhat awkwardly – above a banner reading "London Souvenir", should there be any mistake. For some "tight-fisted" tourists, what a deal it must seem.

– Field notes, 12 July 2012


NECTARINES
3 FOR £1.00
PEACHES
3 FOR £1.00
S.C.A.
AGROMOLINILLO
MOGUER (HUELVA)


£1.30
ENGLISH
RRIES
1566
SMALL FRU
£1.60
FRESH PINEAPPLE
£1.80


Bury Food & Wine
£4·49p
London Souvenir
Bury Food & Wine
£3·49p
LONDON EYE
BRIDGE
LONDON

There's an innate ad hoc-ness in the assembly of kiosks; their displays, which tumble onto the pavement, are considered and created anew each day. Like a travelling big top, the kiosk by the American Church is raised every morning and disappears every night. Its presence must be especially imperceptible on Sundays. A typical kiosk expands to display goods only a short distance from its structure, though the Council-regulated distance is tested regularly by shopkeepers. At the Church, an agreement on this private land permits unbridled ad hoc construction. The stall has been here for 30 years. An existing cast iron fence and brick wall provide the backdrop for the makeshift marquee. Like the rings of a circus, it is divided into three zones: the forecourt with the sunglasses, pashminas, and some luggage, the centre section with more bags, suitcases, and pashminas, and then a section at the back with necessities like toothpicks, batteries, more sunglasses, and luggage as well. Ropes, clips, tarps, modular panels, and patio umbrellas come together to make a structure under which fluorescent lights are hung. It takes three hours to erect.

– Field notes, 18 June 2012


SAARLANDER
ARAMEL COFFEE
HOT DOG
KIMBO
Lucozade
ICE COLD DRINKS
ICE COLD DRINKS
ICE COLD DRINKS
WALL'S
Love ice cream
WEST END
INTERNET CAFÉ
Service
Love Ice Cream
Providing the Authentic Neapolitan Espresso Experience
KIMBO COFFEE HOUR
www.kimbo.it
JACKET POTATOES
FROM 2 00 POUNDS

Where shop meets street

Through their shopfronts, these businesses herald their presence and interact with the street in familiar ways. The street meets the shop at the forecourt: a strip of pavement thick with opportunity. This space, between a shop's threshold and the public thoroughfare, hosts the ad hoc street furniture common to many shops – a Wall`s sign, a newspaper box, a lotto stand, an A-board, a canopy, a rack of postcards, a newspaper placard, stacks of products waiting to be accommodated in the shop, bottles of water in a cooler of ice, elaborate displays of produce, frames put up by magazine distributors perhaps. Like the 19th century Highlander that once stood on Tottenham Court Road, these objects announce the shops. The forecourt is an invitation: handmade neon signs entice; Diana head postcards beckon; and headlines affixed to newspaper boards snag the gaze of passers-by. Tumbling from the shops' thresholds, materials provide bursts of colour, texture, movement, and form in the neighbourhood.

Forecourts are visual focal points and spaces that permit auxiliary commercial activities: Lycamobile reps hawk SIM cards; fruit vendors tend to their variegated displays; aspiring designers sell T-shirts and apparel; a few seats suddenly constitute an outdoor café. These businesses outside are often managed or owned independently from the main business of the host shop. Traders of these shops bring a human presence to the street, as well as convenience to shoppers who do not have to enter the shop to pay for their grapes or ask for directions. As discussed further in Chapter Seven, sharing space in this way has economic advantages to both the traders in the forecourt and their landlords inside. But at times the ad hoc fusion between uses can grate.

Omar says he's rekindling the street's history of apparel design. He's a designer and is proud of his T-shirts and dresses and what they bring to the street. "It's something different, you know?" His place in the forecourt brings attention to his wares, but also exposes them to variable conditions. The canopy of the main shop is broken, but he has fashioned a small marquee by draping a tarp over the two rolling shelves on which he hangs his goods. He invites me to sit on a traditional looking dining chair in the tent with a metallic insulation pad as a cushion. "There, the view is better for you." I can still see his designs, but not the shop window. Omar is embarrassed by the Lycamobile ads affixed to the shopfront behind me. He shakes his head. "Look, I have my nice designs and then this image of crisps and Mr. Muscle behind"

– Field notes, 20 June 2012


DAPPERAAYAN
FASHION
Student 10% Discount
Add min 5 Quantity to cart
Coca-Cola
Mr Muscle
Iced Tea
Lycamobile
camobile.co.uk
bile
rld for less


MoneyGram Money Transfer
Marchmont Market
Post Office
POST OFFICE
ICE CREAM
NEWS & MAGS
FOOD
DRINKS
STATIONERY
Lycamobile


oyster Buy or top up your Oyster here.
Transport for London
oyster Ticket Stop
Russell's
Fresh Baked
THE INDEPENDENT
A NEWSPAPER AND A VIEWSPAPER
QUICK CASH
cash
WITHDRAWALS
cashzone
VISA
WALL'S
MAGNUM
Love Ice Cream
The National Lottery
Play here


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Pay Point
Bill payment
Mobile top-up
TV licence
Chubb
Lebara mobile
Lebara mobile
Lebara mobile
Ticket Stop
oyster Available here
Open
oyster Ticket Stop


PREPAID
MASTERCARD
The New York Times On Sale Here
LE FIGARO
MONOCLE
On Sale Now
International Herald Tribune
EL PAÍS
Wallp
THE HANDMADE ISSUE
ON SAL
The Economist
The Telegraph
FREE INSIDE THIS WEEKEND
50 GREAT BRITISH WALKS
TWO GLOSSY GUIDES INSIDE JULY 23 & 24
ON SALE NOW
Frankfurt
24 ORE
QUICKMARSH
020 7928 5443
Distribution
Wallpa
THE HANDMADE ISSUE
ON SALE


HISTORICAL LONDON
142


FOOD & WINE
Bury
FOOD & WINE
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WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


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LONDON
PICCADILLY CIRCUS


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VENUS 7
GRAYS INN ROAD
BEERS, WINES & SPIRITS
Carlsberg
payzone
The National Lottery
Play here
ONE NIGHT 100 UK MILLIONAIRES
oyster available here
Lyca mobile
VERITASFOOD


conist
zines
Sandwiches
Confectionery
oyster Ticket Stop
oyster Buy or top up your Oyster here.
Passport Photos
stamps here


AMPS
SANDWICHES

The shops' windows are interfaces between the public world of the street and the personal commercial space inside. These surfaces broadcast wares through displays of products, signage, and advertising. Strategies for display vary widely, responding to the physical properties of the window as well as the internal infrastructure of the shop. In some cases – and following more conventional modes of retail display – shelving abuts the window inside and is used to show goods oriented towards the pavement. Rows of souvenirs, household cleaning products, or toiletries may be pressed against the glass for passers-by to see. By contrast, some shops' windows are covered entirely with posters and vinyl stickers, which may display enlarged images of the products over the products themselves. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, some of these windows are covered with branding for products available in the shops. Many other windows provide a combination of these strategies, displaying vinyl stickers, posters, and objects. In these cases, there is an interplay between what is on the glass and what is displayed on the shelves against the window inside. Whereas some displays are curated for the viewer on the pavement, others are oriented towards the inside of the shop, evident, from the outside, with the backs of household products or shelves facing the street. In these cases, it is not uncommon for windows to be mostly obscured, limiting the view into the shops and a view to the street from inside.


Love ice cream
WALL'S
Travelcards & Bus Passes
SOLD HERE
(We also sell Bus save tickets)
The National Lottery
Been missing
missing you
FILLER


WANEY'S FOOD STOR
Loot
loot.com
ICE CREAM TIME
Been missing out on your dreams?
oyster Ticket Stop
WIRED


WANEY'S FOOD STORE
Loot
loot.com
ICE CREAM TIME
Been missing out on your dreams?
oyster Ticket Stop


WANEY'S FOOD STORE
Loot
loot.com
ICE CREAM TIME
Been missing out on your dreams?
oyster Ticket Stop
LOVE


WANEY'S FOOD STORE
Loot
loot.com
ICE CREAM TIME
Been missing out on your dreams?
oyster Ticket Stop
GLAMOUR


OPENING HOURS
7 DAYS A WEEK
7am until 1am
KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON
MONEY BOX
LONDON
TELEPHONE
London


Post cards
25p Each or
10 for £2
WINDSOR
WINDSOR
WINDSOR
LONDON
KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON
Lycamobile
ALL IN ONE VALUE PACK
UNLIMITED
International Calls + Texts
UK Calls Texts Data
BRAND NEW
Strepsils
ANADIN
Zirtek
Beechams
piriteze
LEMSIP MAX
Veno's


CROMER
STREET WC1
Coca-Cola
TALK HOME
Play Here
TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS
WIN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS


oyster® Ticket St
PAKISTAN FLOODS APPEAL
PLEASE HELP NOW
DONATE HERE
oyster Ticket Stop
oyster® available here.
oyster Ticket Stop
oyster® Buy or top up your Oyst
LEBARA MOBILE
SOLD HERE
SHARPEN UP FAST
AVAILABLE HERE NOW!
AlertBox Security
Digicel top up
International calls from the UK, from just 5p a minute.
RECHARGEABLE PHONECARDS
MAN & VAN
WE SALE MOBIE CHARGER & HANDSFREE
WIN DAY AFTER DAY OF PURE PLEASURE
Top up here
WESTERN EUROPE
NO TRANSACTION FEES! NO HIDDEN CHARGES! with escape Prepaid MasterCard
New fares from 2 January


FLOWERS
OPEN 7 DAYS 07 11PM
OFF LICENCE • • NEW APERS
GROCERY • • PHO CARDS
FRESH SANDWICH • SIM DS
COLD DRINKS • • GIFT
FRUITS • • MOB TOP- UPS
FAX & COPY SERVICES AVAILEBLE HERE!!
GT MOBILE
Pay less talk more
£10 Free Credit
with £20 online top-up
Unlimited Free Calls
Lycamobi
UNLIMITED FREE CALLS
Lycamobile to Lycamobile
£10 FREE
1p /min
Anytime, Everyday
Lycamobile
VALUE PACK
Weekly 100 minutes £5
Weekly 200 minutes £5
Monthly 500 minutes £20
Monthly 1000 minutes £20
epay

The shops also participate in the material and civic life of the neighbourhood, to varying degrees, through signage. For Hall and Datta (2010: 73, 71), the shopfront is a "first platform of communication" where signscapes act as "forms of visual capital, which can be exchanged for particular economic capital if they are able to attract the right clientele into these shops." Signage is a public expression of the shop – of its products, services, and identity – and part of the visual economy of the city. The word here, both branded and unbranded, becomes a visual form and part of the everyday cityscape. Through signage, shops show both adherence to conventions and their individuality. The ubiquitous flashing LCD open signs and "food & wine" signs, for example, are each unique. As described more in Chapter Five, signage is produced by hand and machine. The shop names are communicated – often boldly – on boards and light boxes which extend from the shop fronts at a right angle. Some of these names have been inherited. "Central Perks" now unlocks mobile phones; SS News no longer sells newspapers; the "Milkshake and Smoothie" shop now sells fruit only in a more solid form. Officially, a £90 name change fee dissuades many shopkeepers who would otherwise rename their shops (field notes, 23 June 2012). Here, city policy encourages ad hoc signage practices. In other cases, older signage just tends to hang around.

Together, the material of the shops' forecourts, windows, and signage are part of the affective experience of the neighbourhood. It contributes to the texture of place and acts as a site of negotiation between shop and city. As well as heralding the shop in the landscape and the products inside, some visual material directly reflects what is on the outside. For example, many shops welcome community advertisements and notices on their windows, behaving like local noticeboards. Additionally, as described more in Chapters Five and Seven, many exhibit the creativity and translocal identities of the shopkeepers through personal acts of curation and display. These vernacular manifestations can be variously read as meaningful expressions of local identity, as indications of being at home, and as "artifacts of social interactions" (Krase & Shortell 2011: 372).


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LICENCE


OFF
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Machine
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&
GROCERY
OPEN TILL LA


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CASH MACHINE
Costcutter
UNION
EY TRANSFER


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BEER
WINE
SPIRIT
PERSON MUST BE OVER 18 TO PURCHASE
ID REQUIRED FOR UNDER 21


OFF
LICENCE
OPEN


Cadbury
Hannells
Food & Wine


FOOD
WINE
NEWS


Food
& Wine


FOOD
WINE

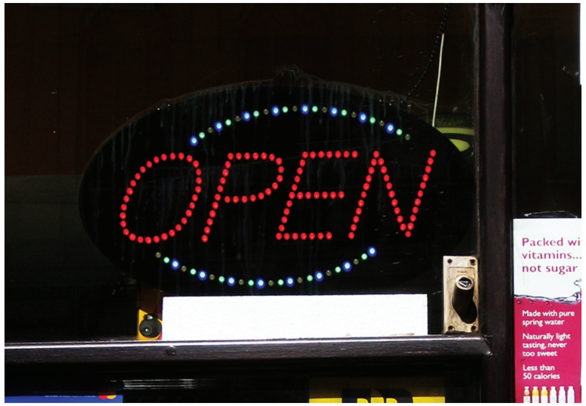

FOOD
&
WINE
OPEN
TILL LATE
OPEN 7 DAYS


Best-in
FOOD
& WINE


FOOD & WINE
OPEN


FOOD
& WINE


FOO
&
WINE


OPEN


OPEN


Open
We're on
QYPE
are you?


OPEN
24
HOURS


WE ARE OPEN
24 HOURS
A DAY
OFF
LICENCE
OPEN


OPEN


OPEN
正宗中國香港


OPEN


Open

Social-material life of the shops

The hotel bellboy reaches for a Boost energy drink. "Ki Khobor?" he asks – "what's news?" in Bengali. "Szeretlek" replies Daleel with a laugh. "I love you" is in the only Hungarian he knows.

– Field notes, 16 August 2012

The shops participate in the neighbourhood materially, socially, and economically. Shopkeepers chat, joke, laugh, upsell. "Need a lighter with those smokes, mate?" "Plans for the weekend?" "See the game?" "Covent Garden? Yeah, that way." Shops act as sites of social practice that build a sense of place. As highlighted in Chapter Two, everyday shops have been described as community hubs and places where difference is levelled (Everts 2010; Pine 2010, 2011; Watson 2009). As part of the high street, shops provide social spaces for civic and community life (Jones et al. 2007). They are places where "people are known, and come to know others" (Hall 2012: 129).

Social interactions pass the time, but also make business sense. These connections have been discussed elsewhere. For example, in his work on corner shops, Everts (2010) found that being social is part of the job and increases patronage. In their work on car boot sales, Gregson and Crewe (1997) discuss how vendors may be total participants in places of fun and spectacle. They engage as buyers, entertainers, and strollers, as well as vendors. In the theatre of the shops and the streets, shopkeepers perform roles as shopkeepers and themselves (Crang 1994; Everts 2010). Teasing the guy who puts up the porn cards in the phone booths, asking after someone's mother, having the right brand of cigarettes on the counter as the customer approaches the till – these actions develop relationships. Customers visit these shops for these interactions, as much as their purchases. Visits by regulars and the habitual social exchanges contribute to the daily rhythms of the shop. Because many shopkeepers work by themselves, without these sociable interactions, the shop gets lonely.

Small shops not only act as social hubs and service providers, but perform the role of community ambassadors, bringing different social groups together, creating a sense of shared ownership (Hastings 2011). As shopkeepers marshal the matter in the neighbourhood, many take on this ambassadorial role – giving directions, watching the rhythms of the neighbourhood, deterring crime, providing places to meet, and greeting the same people every day: the hotel employees from Hungary, the guy who puts the graphic escort service cards in the telephone booths, the girl who stands on the corner with muffin samples from the café down the road, the employees from the Union on cigarette break. The shops act within a constellation of regular neighbourhood performers. Some directly influence the economic and material life of the shop: the brand managers, product representatives, the customers, and enforcement officers from the Council. Some drift through: the "suits" on their way to the tube station, the bus loads of Italian high school students on vacation, the families from Croydon visiting the British Museum. These shops act as points of connection between the area's disparate human and non-human lives. There's something here for everyone.

"I make a positive impact on the community, right? I look out for people. I can chew the fat with the bums on the street and UCL professors. I notice things, you know? I know that the new planters… these ones installed to prevent terrorists driving into the station at 50 mph… which by the way would be an impossible feat during any busy time, cause the traffic, right?… Well, I know they'll be a hazard for the blind fuckers who struggle already to get to the RNIB. I know this. Others don't. But no one asks me. I keep an eye on the neighbourhood. I reckon the station forecourt would still be a shooting gallery if I weren't here."

– Field notes, 22 August 2012

It's my first time in the shop. It is so chaotic. A man in a wheelchair outside is screaming at a patron in the store, insisting he buy him gum. After some words are exchanged the man outside accuses him of racism and of calling him a monkey. The patron vehemently denies the comment, but then the shopkeeper says he is a monkey. They all laugh. The man gets his gum and wheels away. I'm trying to make sense of this. As a witness, I'm stunned and a little embarrassed. The confusion must show on my face. "It's alright. They're local," the shopkeeper tells me with a grin.

– Field notes, 23 June 2012

"We are the backbone of the local security network" he tells me. The kiosk vendors often tip off police if crooks are about. Mo tells me about taking photos of criminals with his phone and passing them to security guards and cops. He flips through a number of them on his phone. "This one – look – she's in a wheelchair, with tubes all in her from the hospital. She was stealing my bags!" The image is fuzzy, but the woman's features are clear enough. "We are there with eyes all the time," Mo tells me. As we leave the café, the guy behind the sandwich counter yells: "I need a suitcase, Mo! Something light, I'm not going away for long." "Sure, sure," says Mo, "come visit me. I'm always there."

– Field notes, 17 August 2012


Coca-Cola
Newsweek
London

The shops' place in the neighbourhood

Places are intersections of multiple identities, connected to other places and times (Massey 1991). As elaborated in Chapter Seven, the shops host overflowing and overlapping communities connected to other places in London and around the world. It would be wrong to refer to this area as one community. Its status as a neighbourhood is as questionable. Though the area behaves as my neighbourhood, it is not everyone's. The local Lycamobile representative covers a vast area of Central London each week: from Hampstead to the Thames, from Soho through Clerkenwell. Some shopkeepers move within much smaller or wider radii than I do. Some merely beam in to their shops on the bus or tube and beam out – moving around the neighbourhood, as I've defined it, very little. Regardless of the shopkeepers' level of participation in the surrounding area, the neighbourhood itself streams in, out, and around the shops. The furniture in the shops' forecourts participates in the sidewalk ballet (Jacobs 1961). People weave around the Lotto sign, crane their necks as they walk by to read curious slogans on T-shirts, stop briefly under the canopy to escape the rain while finding their umbrellas. Things too move in, out, and around the shops: shopkeepers lend each other goods – a box of Orbits here, a carton of Marlboro Lights there; a chocolate bar is bought on one corner, its wrapper stuck through the fence on the next; leaves blow down the street. These material movements tie the shops to the local area and contribute to the rhythm of place (Lefebvre 2004). The social-material interactions of the shops are swept up in the gathering process of the city.

I ♥ LONDON
LONDON
OXFORD UNIVERSITY
London
England
UK
LONDON ENGLAND
sale
NOW £5.99
SALE
£9.99
LAMPARD
FABREGAS
4

£3.99
3 FOR £10
205 via King's C
gecoach

I'm standing in front of the shop with Hyla, looking at his adapted storage unit. We shift our attention to a woman who comes to inspect the produce. She grabs some bananas, and seems set on the cherry tomatoes as well, but then puts them back down. "You want more in the bowl?" Hyla asks. "Take as many as you like!" She smiles at the invitation. It is late in the day. The fruit is hot in the sun. Perhaps Hyla is keen to finish with less extra stock. In any case, the woman is delighted, laughing as she picks the best tomatoes from the surrounding clear plastic bowls. She only ends up with five, maybe six more – having negotiated his expectations and tempered her indulgence – but she leaves very happy. It is a nice moment that makes us all feel good and want to be connected to this place.

– Field notes, 19 June 2012

While I'm in the shop, the rain starts to fall even harder. A group of sodden construction workers comes in, joking with the shopkeeper and his brother. One asks if he can take two drinks and pay after he gets his cheque. No problem, he's told. A teenaged girl with tight braids comes in and buys a long rectangular fairy cake wrapped in cellophane and some Extra gum. For a moment we all stand looking out the window, as if we were stuck in an elevator together. All wondering what to do next. All increasingly aware of each other and the way the moisture enhances the smell of our clothes, our bodies. The construction workers make the first move. "Thanks boss!" one sings as he dashes back into the rain.

– Field notes, 23 June 2012

The shops produce shared sociality. While each thing that happens is a unique singularity, "some practices become habits and routines. When repeated over and over they create a powerful sense of place" (Cresswell 2014: 15). Together with these routine practices, the shared materiality in the shops – the comparable tools, products, and spatial layouts – enhances their familiarity. And so, despite their heterogeneity, ad hoc shops are at once different and familiar.

Though some shared material and social currents run through the shops, they are heterogeneous and unpredictable. This is not unlike how Crewe and Gregson (1997, 1998) described car boot sales: cluttered and erratic, entertaining and convivial. Like car boot sales, ad hoc shops are characterised by "the taste of necessity" – as opposed to "aesthetic taste" (Gregson & Crewe 1997: 99) – often distinguished by practicality, bargains, and basics. An imposing presence on the pavement, kitsch objects, low order goods, and an overwhelming array of assorted things contribute to a sense of disorientation in some shops and points of contention.

The shopkeeper laughs, but it's an uneasy laughter. He's troubled, he tells me, by his landlord's complaint that his shop looks like a refugee camp on the pavement.

– Field notes, 18 June 2012

Managing matter

As illustrated, the ad hoc-ness of the shops parallels the ad hoc-ness of the neighbourhood. In effect, the assemblage, feeling, and texture of the city can be traced down through the material of the street to a shop's forecourt and the peeling corner of a sticker on the window. Though the materiality of place can be paralleled and charted in these ways, the vitality of the local shops finds itself at odds with the vitality of the city as imagined by actors implicated in the local area's management and urban change. Town planning, urban design, and local politics are in the business of crafting urban material and affect. The state and local associations shape the matter of the shops and retail practices through policies that guide signage, land use, employment, tenure, the use of public space, advertising, and construction. These policies shape both how the shops function, but also how they look.

The aesthetics of the neighbourhood have long been managed. As we saw on the neighbourhood tour, early 19th century shops on Marchmont Street were required by their landlord, the Foundling Estate, to select styles and architectural features from a limited number of design options (see also Scalzo 2009 on taste and Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts). Despite the long-standing encouragement of aesthetic refinement, these pressures have shifted of late. The regular management of material in the neighbourhood has recently intersected with a number of trends: namely the acceleration of local development, the creation of Business Improvement Districts and neighbourhood associations, and political interests in revitalising high streets. These sorts of interventions have been described within a wider context of neoliberal approaches to urban planning, characterised by the decentralisation and deregulation of markets, favouring private- over public-sector management (Brenner & Theodore 2002; Hall & Hubbard 1998; Jessop 2002; Sager 2011). They have encouraged both the development of new policies and the reinvigorated enforcement of old ones designed to shape urban matter.

Here, I outline these three tendencies interspliced with field notes that resonate with them. I then elaborate on notions of vibrancy and the emphasis on de-cluttering described in urban design guidelines. My focus here is on currents in planning that impact the urban material and the management of that material. (The same policies will be discussed again in Chapter Seven as they relate to the more financial challenges of the shops.) I want to stress that the shifts felt by the ad hoc shops are not directly attributable to these tendencies. For example, the neighbourhood was not one of the 27 "Portas Pilots" – the test areas that saw investment and interventions as inspired by the strategies of Mary Portas (2011) (see Carmona 2014), nor did I see any shops forced to close as a result of the King's Cross redevelopment. However, these planning currents, along with tendencies in urban design, have together shaped a planning and governance culture that has some impact on how shops are regarded and managed. I hope my local examples will make this connection. Finally, these examples draw especially from the experience of shopkeepers in kiosks, which are licensed by the local council. As such, a different regulatory framework permits a greater degree of material management.

Acceleration

London's gentrification can be traced back to the mid-1950s (Moran 2007). The transformation of the city's working-class neighbourhoods by middle-class gentrifiers – economically, socially, and materially – has been well documented (Butler et al. 2013; Butler & Lees 2006; Hamnett 1979, 2003, 2009; Lyons 1996). Patterns of inner-city class change (Glass 1964) have been described – even 30 years ago – as complex and pervasive (Hamnett & Williams 1980).

Gentrification has often been explained through, and made visible by, its physical impact on the urban landscape. In 1974, Raban described the transformation in intimate material terms:

> The first sign is a crisp white painted house front. Outside, one of those continental biscuit-tin cars, a Renault 4L or a Citroen 2CV is parked... Inside, through the window – it has blinds not curtains – one spots a Japanese paper lampshade, a smart little bookcase of the kind you get on mail order through the Observer, stacked with glossy volumes of reproductions, a stripped pine table, a long sealed and sanded floor with dead sheep for carpets. The middle interior wall has gone, and one can see through into the back garden with its breakfast patio. The knockers-through are here.

Beyond private interiors, material manifestations of neighbourhood change are also commonly associated with historic preservation and the commodification of industrial heritage (J.M. Jacobs 1996, 1998). The connection between neighbourhood change and aesthetics relates not only to the changing manifestations of class taste, but also to gentrification's association with artists (Ley 2003; Mathews 2010; Zukin 1982). In brief, by moving to an area to take advantage of cheap rent, flexible spaces, and urban density, artists inadvertently groom inner-city spaces for other investment (Smith 1996). Or alternatively, they are complicit in the changes. In the London area of Hoxton, for example, Harris (2011) borrows Stallabrass' (1999) notion of the "urban pastoral" to describe how working-class lives and objects become sources of pastoral fantasies for artists, many of whom work with the real estate community to benefit from these reimaginings. Be it the ironic appropriation of working-class objects in public art, the subtle changes in building restoration, or the opening of a stylish café, gentrification is registered materially on the built fabric of the city.

Recognising the power of artists and the middle-classes to transform neighbourhoods, urban governments have endeavoured to harness the powers of gentrification to encourage market-led investment (Lees 2000). Since the 1990s, gentrification has been a key strategy of urban growth (Smith 2002), though it is not always labelled as such. For Smith (2002), using terms like "regeneration", "transformation", "renaissance", and "revitalisation", distracts from the implications of class displacement. As illustrated by official quotes through the neighbourhood tour above, the changes in the neighbourhood have been described in these gentler terms. Is this gentrification? It is difficult to generalise about my case study area, though certainly the market-led revitalisation projects within the neighbourhood – like redevelopments of the Brunswick Centre and Store Street – have had an impact on the experience of the neighbourhood. The current King's Cross redevelopment will be a much larger catalyst for change.

The development of 2,000 homes, new site of Central Saint Martins, and five million square feet of office space will bring enormous transformations, economically and socially (Camden & Islington 2012). Edwards (2010), for one, forecasts that once the King's Cross redevelopment is complete, those living and doing business in the area will be less diverse, and together Camden and Islington Councils have drafted plans in ensure the existing community is not left behind (Camden Council & Islington Council 2012: 2). As outlined above, the neighbourhood has seen changes already. And intriguingly, the term gentrification was coined by Ruth Glass (1964) while working in the King's Cross area (Campkin 2004; Mutale & Edwards 2003). But it is difficult to define where gentrification starts and where it stops. Furthermore, the choice of term used is of little consequence to the lives of those living in the area and the material of the place.

Bill's kiosk faces the largest regeneration project in Europe. What a view for him! But his presence isn't part of the imagined vista. The Council, the station, the architects, Transport for London… they all tried to close him down. "They kept telling me, 'The King's Cross redevelopment doesn't have a place for you.'" They offered him a new retail space in the new station. "But I'm a street trader!" His kiosk has been here for 18 years. There has been trading on this spot since 1914. Trading represents his livelihood and hopefully his son's future as well. He tried to work with the conglomerate, suggesting a combined kiosk and an info centre, which would have suited his self-appointed role as ambassador and local historian. He has also tried to make a positive material impact. With pride, he shows me the back of the kiosk which is emblazoned with a Coca-Cola logo, "brought in from the continent," just for the torch relay. "I did all this for the Games, but the Council, the station, they don't care," he tells me.

The Council insisted he remove the stall. He stayed put. Deadlines came and went. Tribunals were confusing, disempowering. Further deadlines were given. For months he expected a padlock on his stall in the morning or maybe scaffolding blocking his door. "But I know the street traders act," he tells me, "They can't do nothing." With the help of a lawyer, he did ultimately draft documents which the station conglomerate could not ignore, nor refute. He was moved slightly to accommodate the renovations and was made to promise to buy a shinier stall. "It was their vision, right? I just didn't fit in." – Field notes, 22 August 2012

Though the fruit stand in the forecourt is new, the shop has held to this corner for twelve years. Lately business is better, something Yonas attributes to the change spinning around him. "It was a lot of crime and vagrants… a lot of drunkenness." The proximity of the hostels and hotels helps. The Eurostar too brought a boon to his business. "There are a lot of good, clean people now."

– Field notes, 19 June 2012

There's a murmur amongst traders about the rising rates this year. The notification letters trickle out and most are still waiting. One trader in a prominent spot was issued a 35% increase over last year. He protested to the Council, which then asked him for a statement of his accounts. After legal consultation, he learned this is not necessary.

– Field notes, 8 April 2013

"Gentrification," writes Butler (T. C. Butler 2007: 761), "has always been paired with displacement and is fundamentally a process of class change" (see also Bourne 1993; Meligrana & Skaburskis 2005; Redfern 2003; Smith 2002). Though avoiding displacement was one of the King's Cross Partnership's revitalisation goals (Mutale & Edwards 2003), displacement has occurred in the King's Cross redevelopment; sex workers, the homeless, and drug users that once used the site have shifted elsewhere. In my area, shops see cycles of shutting and opening. Though none closed to make way for more stylish establishments, four shops folded during my study period. In two of those spots, new ad hoc souvenir shops emerged to replace corner shops. (The other two remain empty.) Did the gentrification of the neighbourhood spell their demise? Though most shop owners did discuss rent challenges, I do not know. But here I want to argue that this change has brought another pressure to the shop – to their material.

Because he did not find evidence of dislocation in London's Hoxton, Harris (2011) asks us to consider a new sort of gentrification, which sees class change but no direct displacement. With or without displacement, with this class change comes shifts in what is acceptable aesthetically and how the material of the built environment is managed. Beyond the possible forced closure of some shops, there is another displacement here – an eviction at a micro scale. Here, then, besides exerting direct financial pressure on shops, processes of neighbourhood change may bring about tacit, material displacement. Material deemed out of place is under pressure.

"There are some sites where kiosks have become tired, unattractive and not in keeping with the area that they are in. They have advertising and sponsorship that doesn't have full permission of the Council and the type of commodities which the trader sells has increased without the full knowledge of the Council. There have also been examples of traders over spilling the boundaries of their area and adding to the feeling of street clutter. [...] It is our vision that kiosks across Camden will conform to a standard look and we will be working with traders in the long-term to help realise this."

– Camden Street Trading Strategy 2012: 15

Mo just wants to get on with it... like it used to be. When he set up his first kiosk 25 years ago, he got the go ahead, but it wasn't exactly official. The Council was getting good money from the street traders and saw the benefit. "They just didn't bother us, really." The local markets demanded more attention and the street trading officials put their energies there. "Now things are different. Now, if they don't like you, they will come and fuss if you're slightly over your line, or selling the wrong goods. Five points to your licence each time." With 25 points, they have the power to revoke it. The Council visits some traders every day. "You have to stay on the good side," Mo tells me.

– Field notes, 26 July 2012

Business improvement districts, neighbourhood associations & branding initiatives

The London BIDs Handbook (n.d.: 8) explains that a "Business Improvement District is a legally and geographically defined partnership for area improvement and service delivery, funded by the levy-paying businesses within an agreed boundary." BIDs are a new regime of urban governance, which see devolution of centralised power and the increased control of the businesses over the financing and management of their local areas (Ward 2006). First established in Toronto in the 1960s (Ward 2007), BIDs are a North American import, brought to England and Wales by New Labour to respond to economic challenges facing city-centre management (Cook 2008). This model is touted as successful and one that London is looking to expand (Economic Committee 2013). In her review of high streets, discussed below, Portas (2011) recommends even more powers be given to BIDs, to create "super-BIDs."

The first BID in London was established in 2004 (Ward 2007). As highlighted above, the two BIDs in my study area are inMidtown (which replaced inHolborn), established in 2005 and The Fitzrovia Partnership, established in 2012. Like most BIDs, these organisations work to ensure safety, promote the area, and maintain the physical environment to sustain a healthy business climate; they aim to increase the "liveability" of urban areas by making them more "clean, safe, and friendly" (Ward 2007: 665). On the street, BID ambassadors provide directions and shuffle undesirable individuals and materials along.

He tells me about the emergence of The Fitzrovia Partnership. At first it shook things up a bit. Initially it objected to the traders on the street and went to great lengths to encourage his landlord to evict him. He dug in his heels. Now he pays about £200 each year for his membership. But he figures it's worth it. The BID offers local security, they help dissuade vandalism, and stop pickpockets by providing security mobiles to track thieves between businesses. They also put pressure on the Council to help the businesses, though he's not sure what changes have been made. Having Mo on board is better than his annual £200 fee. On the street, he acts as the Partnership's ears and eyes.

– Field notes, 20 July 2012

As we sip our tea, the Councillor expresses concern about the rise of these new partnerships, which take the place of community organisations in some areas. She praised the inHolborn's (now inMidtown) willingness to work with local people, but cautioned that The Fitzrovia Partnership had developers securely at the helm, which tends to override other local concerns. Sometimes interests are shared. More often, financial and commercial issues get more attention.

– Field notes, 20 July 2012

"That shop? Oh, that shop is so Stratford East… so down-market. It's not the direction this neighbourhood is going. […] We think it's tat. [The shopkeepers] don't understand the market. That's what the problem is. At that shop, [the shopkeepers are] just kids, and they don't know what they're doing."

– Interview with an official involved in the management of local shops, 30 July 2012

Though not mandated by the state, neighbourhood associations have also grown to play a role in managing the public realm. For example, as discussed on the neighbourhood tour, the Marchmont Association (MA) manages the streetscape with shop front design guidelines, window box workshops, and shop front awards. The President of the MA tells me he runs a very powerful group, which directs the Council on issues of maintenance and licensing in the interests of local businesses and residents (interview, 30 July 2012). He worked hard, for example, to keep one corner shop from obtaining a license to sell individual bottles of beer and another from extending their hours of alcohol sales. The MA Chair's Annual Report (de Freitas 2014) cites a number of efforts to manage the aesthetics of the neighbourhood. For instance, the MA encouraged Camden Planners to "threaten" an off-licence shop with legal action over bright unauthorised signage. In another case, it has urged the Council to intervene in the "unsightly" and "parlous state of the shop front" of one working class café, which "continues to blight the appearance of the conservation area" (de Freitas 2014: 3). Local ad hoc shops are often the target of these interventions, but not always in a position to address these criticisms.

The MA President implemented a successful "shop local" program which saw the creation of a discount scheme and promotion of local shopping. But the "Asian shops," as he calls them, did not play a part, "because of education issues, perhaps language as well. They do things only when they are made to do them. And in any case, they are always in the shop. They have their heads down and don't look up." At times, his only interaction with these businesses is stopping them from building or intervening in their applications to the Council.
– Field notes, 30 July 2012

We are both feeling a little deflated today, realising that the street traders association is not getting off the ground. We spent the last three months working together to set up a traders association of Camden. Mo figured that the threats of standardisation, the crack down on advertising, and the forced movement of some kiosks were best addressed together. I obtained lists of traders and helped him draft letters of information for other traders, making the case for solidarity. Together, we bombed around the neighbourhood in Mo's car to deliver all the letters and pitch the idea. Mo had even organised a date and venue for our first meeting. But today, it seems dead. It felt to both of us that there was some keen interest, but now very few are on board. No one has time for this. And no one wants to rock the boat.
– Field notes, 30 October 2012

The MA, The Fitzrovia Partnership, inMidtown, the King's Cross conglomerate – there are a lot of planning forces at play. Efforts at local branding tell shops: "Pull up your bootstraps… We're in this together, and you're lagging behind." Organisations rally the troops waving neighbourhood flags on lamp posts. But it all feels a little over our heads, disconnected from what's happening on the ground.
– Field notes, 13 November 2012

The management of the street has become the management of a brand. Neighbourhood branding practices are often at the heart of BID and neighbourhood association initiatives (Bookman & Woolford 2013). In tandem with BIDs, urban branding strategies represent new modes of governance which see "citizens and non-state bodies implicated in urban revitalisation" (Rantisi & Leslie 2006: 366). Associated with place marketing (Gold & Ward 1994; Kearns & Philo 1993), urban branding employs "brandscaping" techniques to narrate and theme space (Klingmann 2007). In this process, product-branding language and practices are used to transform the cultural and economic aspects of place. Place branding is often themed variously in connection with a personality, a signature urban place or quality, or event (Ashworth 2009). It can variously be applied to ethnic neighbourhoods – Chinatowns or "Little Italy"s – to cultural quarters like festival marketplaces and waterfront developments (Oakley 2007; Metzger 2001; Robertson 1997), and even to the city as a whole (see Evans 2003 on Bilbao's association with the Guggenheim).

Important for my argument here, is the way branded space establishes and enforces a cohesive whole and urban order. As Bookman and Woolford (2013: 302, citing Cresswell 1996) write:

> Involved in the patterning of space, the urban brand is an interface through which coalitions of elites inscribe and enact preferred spatial discourses and expectations for a place. This involves the production of symbolic boundaries through processes of spatial classification and ordering that determine who or what is 'in place' or 'out of place' in a particular branded territory.

Entire neighbourhoods seldom have the capital needed for major aesthetic renovations, Seven miles or so to the east, the shops of Stratford Village still reflect the diversity of the neighbourhood, but efforts to sweep a tidy path for the 2012 Olympic torch relay preened its ad hoc-ness for a time. As shown in "before and after" photos published in the Daily Mail, interventions muted or covered signage, played down the brand, streamlined folksy typefaces, and toned down the offers that once plastered many windows. Canopies of one shop now match its neighbour. There is uniformity to the design. In effect, the ad hoc-ness was groomed.

Mia: "I brought in some images from that article I told you about… the before and afters from Stratford Village."

Daleel: "Yeah?"

Mia: "Yeah. I was wondering what you thought of the changes they made."

Daleel: "Hmmmm…. I think it is looking good. But it won't last…"

Mia: "What do you mean?"

Daleel: "It won't stay this way. It's for the tourists and for the outsiders. It's more attraction to these people. It's not for locals."

Mia: "How will it change?"

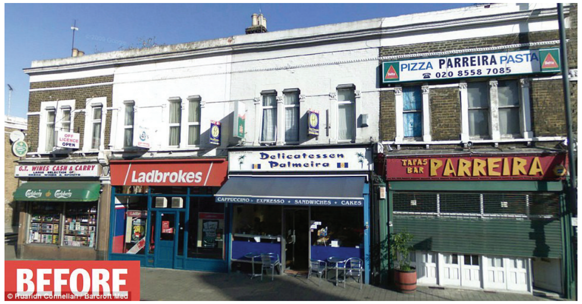
Daleel: "In this shop here, they removed the canopy. But they will need a canopy. The ads here, they're gone. They need to show what they have on display. Also, these shops will need the income from the branding on their shops. It will change back."

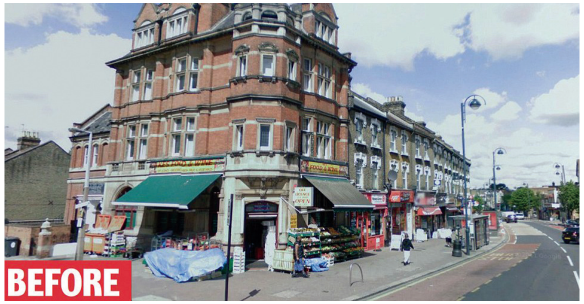
Mia: "I can see what you mean."

Daleel: "What do you think?"

Mia: "I think they made this diverse strip look like an English village."

Daleel: "Ha! The British always want to go back in time. Like the opening ceremonies… They want to increase the image of British culture. But it's okay." – Field notes, 1 August 2012





High street revitalisation

Notions of BID expansion and place branding have been reinvigorated recently in debates about the future and "death of the high street". Dawson (1988) contends that the high street is a 19th century construct. In the face of increased choice and out-of-town shopping options, he explains how high streets have had to work hard – adapting, diversifying, and enticing – to keep increasingly mobile consumers coming back through the late 20th century. Since the economic downturn in 2008, these structural changes to the high street have been exacerbated by the rise of e-commerce, increased rents, and the decline in new retail space (Carmona 2014). The closure of many large British retailers, post offices (All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group, 2006), and pubs (Urwin 2009), the domination of clone chain shops in some areas (New Economics Foundation 2005), and increased retail vacancies along high streets have signalled a "crisis," stimulating a number of interventions, including Prime Minister David Cameron's enlisting of retail guru Mary Portas in 2011 (on suburban high streets, see also Griffiths et al. 2008).

The Portas Review (Portas 2011) contends that in order to reinsert themselves as the centres of social and cultural life and confront present challenges, high streets need to act more like malls and present themselves more like brands. They must "curate a space" (Portas 2011: 18). Portas notes that

> If the high street was in single ownership, like a department store, it would have a vision, a high level strategy and direction, it would choose what it wanted in a particular space to fit with a vision and proactively target the businesses and services that were missing.

To develop clear visions for high streets, and to "[get] our town centres running like businesses" (Portas 2011: 18), she proposes shifts in urban governance and the introduction of powerful Town Teams. These Teams – the "curators of the future" (Portas 2011: 21) – would guide place-specific solutions, in collaboration with "super-BIDs," to reimagine a lively high street in which shopping is but one part. Many policy suggestions are also made relating to business rates, parking, community policy, landlord responsibilities, and planning reform. More notable for this project is the focus on the curation of a new experience economy, the support for meanwhile uses for vacant shops, and the celebration of traditional markets.

The government's response to the Review was enthusiastic (DCLG 2012a). A contest to identify twelve "Portas Pilot" towns was announced, workshops held, and toolkits developed. In addition, further funds were made available to help BIDs access loans, support shops recovering from London's 2011 riots, and reward town centres with innovative plans.

In response, a number of other policy documents and initiatives also emerged to support high streets and make positive effects on the built environment. Like the Portas plan, they aim to "breathe economic and community life back into our high streets" (Portas 2011: 14), identify the value of these places, and highlight tools and strategies for revitalisation. These include the National Planning Practice Guidance (2013), Re-imagining Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise our High Streets (DCLG 2012c: 11), Parades to be Proud of: Strategies to Support Local Shops (DCLG 2012b), Action of High Streets (Mayor of London 2014), and The High Street London Report (Gort Scott & UCL 2010). This heightened attention to high streets is also reflected in the Manchester Metropolitan University's ESRC-funded High Street 2020 Project, which seeks to develop a model to forecast and manage retail change.

Vibrancy and de-cluttering

Like urban branding documents, the high street strategies make frequent reference to vitality, vibrancy, and life. These ways of describing the urban environment were popularised in the 1960s by Jane Jacobs. For Jacobs (1961), vibrancy described the qualities of life in New York, and especially in Greenwich Village, against the modernist order of planning regimes. Vibrancy has become a clichéd buzz word for urban development, especially as it relates to creative cities (Frank 2012; Markusen 2012). It is connected with ideas of diversity, street life, and a new type of urban consumption. The importance of vitality and vibrancy is repeated in the high street literature, which often associates it with "lively, animated high streets" (DETR 1999) and "the capacity of a centre to grow" (DCLG n.d.). Levels of vitality or intensity are discussed by the Small Shops Group as a way to sustain a commercial street and avoid decline (APPSSG, 2006).

What is meant by vibrancy and vitality in this context? Ann Markusen (2012: n.p.) writes that "vibrancy" is a fuzzy concept: "one that means different things to different people, but flourishes precisely because of its imprecision." In his popular denunciation of the word – and the "vibrancy Ponzi scheme" – Frank (2012: n.p.) writes that

> Vibrancy is so universally desirable, so totemic in its powers, that even though we aren't sure what the word means, we know the quality it designates must be cultivated. The vibrant, we believe, is what makes certain cities flourish. The absence of vibrancy, by contrast, is what allows the diseases of depopulation and blight to set in.

More troubling for Frank, is what sort of place it might imagine. He continues:

> it's easy to figure out what the foundations believe the vibrant to be. Vibrant is a quality you find in cities or neighborhoods where there is an arts or music "scene," lots of restaurants and food markets of a certain highbrow type, trophy architecture to memorialize the scene's otherwise transient life, and an audience of prosperous people who are interested in all these things.

More recently, writing in *The Guardian* newspaper, Ian Smith (2014) rather comically suggests that embracing urban vibrancy brings a new sort of displacement:

> I started reading this paragraph from a recent report: "The Inner City Vibrancy rankings give what Experian believes is a measure of how vibrant our cities are in terms of having a young, affluent resident population – in short cities with real communities ..." and then stopped.
>
> Hang on. What? Real communities, you say. Well sorry to be a wheezing 20th-century bagpipe, but a paywall-protected, postcode-defined constellation of young affluent residents doesn't sound like a real community to me, son. Children shouting and laughing, that's what a real community sounds like. Neighbours chatting at the top of their voices over three back gardens, that's what a real community sounds like. Not a gurning ukulele ensemble doing a version of You Got the Love in a pop-up Great British Bake Off tent behind a Michelin-starred gastropub, you doughnut.

The concerns expressed here speak back to issues of gentrification highlighted earlier. Evidently, the vibrancy of particular bodies is more desirable than others to stimulate economic renewal. But what is also of interest to me here is the relationship of these bodies to the vibrancy of other matter. The activity suggested in official promotion of vibrancy and vitality is decidedly human. The vitality imagined is human against an environment that is clear and cohesive – a quiet backdrop on which the social vibrancy of the middle classes can flourish.

As part of stimulating "vibrancy," and in tandem with economic strategies, these plans and policies focus on the quality and image of place. Urban design is presented as a way to lure people back to the high street. The "designscapes" that emerge from design-led generation enrol the built environment and a network of signifiers to cater to elite tastes (Julier 2005). Though it would seem at first to contradict notions of vibrancy, "de-cluttering" and "cleaning up" the streetscape are particular themes at work here. Tendencies towards urban minimalism can be situated within wider normative trends in the home and in the street – trends, once associated with the middle classes, but which increasingly discipline the aesthetics of everyday life for all (Holloway & Hones 2007: 260-261). De-cluttering has been taken seriously on the high street. In response to the Portas Review, the Department of Cities and Local Government (DCLG 2012a: 14) writes

> we have already written to local authorities highlighting our commitment to reducing street clutter, urging them to get rid of unnecessary signs, railings, and so on, to make streets tidier and less confusing for motorists and pedestrians.

In another instance, *Re-imagining Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise our High Streets* (DCLG 2012c: 11) uses the de-cluttering of Walworth Road as an example of how small design changes can make big improvements. Interventions along Walworth Road saw the removal of "600 unnecessary signs and poles, and around 425m of pedestrian guard rails" (CABE 2011: n.p.). The 2011 redesign of Exhibition Road as a shared-use space is also touted as a successful example of de-cluttering. Carmona (2014) explains that de-cluttering is connected with ideas of order, sanitation, driver confusion, and safety. He describes a

> mixed almost haphazard townscape scene that characterises most of London's high streets, an impression multiplied by the equally haphazard, cluttered, and crowded nature of the streetscape, including the street furniture, signage, lighting, planters, utilities boxes, traffic controls, and so forth. […] Despite the somewhat chaotic aesthetic, the high roads possessed no shortage of visual interest, and retain a certain character and quality. (Carmona 2014: 51)

These initiatives are part of the city's efforts to manage change and investment in the city. Improvements to the public realm, in particular, bring capital. However, they also result in higher market prices and increased rent for shopkeepers, estimated to rise by 4.9% following streetscape improvements (CABE 2007: 7). Thus strains are both material and financial. Fiscal constraints facing these shops simmer throughout the thesis and will be addressed directly in Chapter Seven. The financial strain on the government is more central to my argument here, as the impetus for the shops' material interventions.


"Greatest day of my...
SKYFALL


Espresso Drinks
Non Espresso Drinks

I sit in the Patisserie Valerie with a local Councillor. Just don't use my name, she cautions. "Talk of standardisation is talk of privatisation. It's a revenue-raising exercise and a result of government cuts." She tells me about the changes to the markets on Leather Lane – the architects who are trying to manage change – posh it up. Changes to street trading are about improving the public realm and about charging more money to traders. A proposal to privatise the management of street kiosks – called "miscellaneous sites" – is afoot. Currently, the borough owns the land on which kiosks sit, but not the kiosks themselves. These are owned and managed by the traders. The proposed plan would see the Council replace traders' existing kiosks with a fleet of new ones, which would remain under public ownership, but managed through a private-public partnership, like so much of the local street furniture: the telephone booths and the bus shelters. Though officially prohibited now, advertising is widespread on traders' stalls and currently provides significant revenue. A standardised stall would curtail this income and restrain unruly display practices. Both would eat into profits…profits that would be enjoyed instead by the management company which may use the kiosks as vehicles for their own advertising.

– Field notes, 20 July 2012

Islington is a terrain of standardised kiosks. I ask about the changes around Angel Station. Changes? The uniform kiosk came in over a decade ago and is literally part of the furniture. A newsagent tells me that he is completely in favour of standardisation. Sure, he couldn't add any stickers advertising SIM mobile companies to the Islington-owned kiosk, but that would look messy anyway. The Council manages the ad space, but it's okay. He used to have a rickety kiosk that would blow around in the wind. This is much more secure. He is warmer and happier.

– Field notes, 27 July 2012

More than money-making or control, standardisation comes down to the aesthetics of the kiosk, according to the author of the Street Trading Strategy. But besides a uniform look, what does the Council want to see? "Diversity," he tells me. "What sort of diversity?" "Well, why not cupcakes," he asks. This seems to capture the Council's position on miscellaneous sites: there are too many traders selling low order goods through messy stalls in rapidly changing neighbourhoods. The diversity sought is not the sort on display. He explains that the benefits would be shared. Traders' disconnection from the changing local market hampers their success as well. Why unlock phones when you could make lattes? The new kiosks will make them look more attractive to consumers too, he reckons. In the past he worked with a team to develop a radically different kiosk design. This accordion model (shown here) was shelved for a focus on management issues. Now that they have reconnected with the traders, plans for a new kiosk have been renewed and simplified. The only thing standing in the way of the Council's vision is money.

–Field notes, 2 November 2012

On a busy corner, a stone's throw from the Chalk Farm station, sits a shiny steel box. It is empty and sealed up tight but gleamingly polished. Mo had been meaning to check out the Council's proposed model kiosk for a while. We get out of his car to size it up. Weeks of discussing the standardisation as monstrous had somehow coloured my material expectations. Mo's too, I think. He had driven past it a number of times but never stepped out to have a look. It's actually quite handsome – for a steel box. It's bigger than we expected – maybe 4 x 10 feet. It's also much taller than most of the kiosks in the borough. It has presence. The surface is lightly brushed to offer some simple ornament on the sides. The window panel at the front is quite generous in size. A small wedge props up the lower corner to keep it level on the sloping pavement. For a moment, we enjoy being impressed by its sleekness and restraint, before the questions come: "But how would this work to sell flowers?" "Would the shoe repair guy be able to get his machinery in one of these?" "If that plan is to gain revenue from ads, where would these go with a door at the back?" "For a newsagent, maybe, but even then, there simply isn't space to display goods." It's a far cry from Mo's current kiosk, which has enormous panels that swoop up, acting like wings looming over the pavement. It is perfectly suited to sell his wares. Mo brought up his concerns about the new design with the Camden's Street Trading Team – about the incongruence between the proposed stall and his current needs for space. "You chose to sell luggage. It's your problem," he was told.

– Field notes, 25 October 2012

Taken together these policies, practices, and regulatory bodies work to manage not only the economies of urban spaces, but their matter and feeling as well. As shown here, these are recognised as inextricably linked. Urban place and economies are unpredictable. For Wentworth (2001: 413), "the pleasure of the street […] is that it's out of control, it's a kind of free theatre." The street's ad hoc-ness is not to everyone's liking. Anxiety about the material integrity of the neighbourhood is enduring. As highlighted, the Council has long threatened to crack down on street trading offences, and, since Victorian times, shopkeepers on Marchmont Street have been steered towards proper taste. What are new are rates of change, scale of investment, and privatisation. This acceleration, and the branding efforts that trail along, bring more pressure to shops.

Conclusions: Ad hoc material in the neighbourhood

This chapter draws out themes running through the thesis concerning the politics of material difference and affective atmospheres and aesthetics of order and disorder. Here, I have outlined how the materialities of the city and the shops get caught up in wider notions of affective economies. I show how – like many retail environments – the strategies of planners, developers, and marketers may involve the "affective engineering" of urban space. I argue that this engineering sits in tension with the ad hoc sensibilities of the shops and that vibrancy, and indeed affect, are not only embodied and sensed, but also realms of contested taste and value. The idea of vibrancy – and its role in cultural economies of gentrification and urban regeneration – is important here.

I show how conceptions of vibrancy imagined by urban strategists can paint a vague and limiting picture of urban life, privileging the market, middle class, and commercial environments narrated by narrow ideas of good taste. As outlined in Chapter Two, Jane Bennett (2010) gives a different reading of vibrancy, as something emergent from constitutive material, not foisted upon it, and certainly not attached to a particular class of people. Things have a vitality and capacity to act independent from our understandings of them and uses for them as humans. Because the neighbourhood is an assemblage of lively material components exerting their thing power in complex ways, it cannot be controlled by urban governance structures.

The agency of diverse bodies, things, and mediums sets limits on the sort of vitality imagined by planners. Chewed gum is stuck under a granite bench at King's Cross. A plastic zip-tie is employed to brace loose wires at the remodelled intersection at Euston and Tottenham Court Road. The stitching on an inMidtown banner unravels. Materials transform. Spontaneous solutions are needed. Ad hoc-ness comes to play.

Though urban strategists are not faced directly with Bennett's theoretical arguments, they are confronted with ad hoc shops, which assert her argument in a very material way in the landscape. Ad hoc shops are unpredictable – alive with unruly matter. I have argued that their material vitality and tastes of necessity transgress aesthetic and affective boundaries in ways that are threatening to some. Accordingly, the shops, the shopkeepers, and the material are deemed out of place (Cresswell 1996; Douglas 1966; Sibley 1988, 1995). Throughout the chapter, I refocused notions of gentrification more squarely on material, arguing that the purification of space is both social and material. The material of the shops is inscribed with a sort of "otherness" and devalued by strategies of neighbourhood change (see Sassen 2007: 108). Mirroring Gregson et al.'s (1997) findings in car boot sales, I found that regulations have been crafted and enforced to exclude undesirable "others" from areas of commercial exchange. As shown here, and picked up again in Chapter Seven, the material of the shop is the conduit of its exclusion.

The shops, and the materials in them, have a presence in the neighbourhood. Ad hoc shops test the looseness of space and recognise its possibilities against strategies that seek to limit the freedom of varied material expressions (see Franck & Stevens 2007). Though the affective matter of the ad hoc shops is not recognised as vital by policy makers, the material and affective processes that work through and around the shop emphasise that policy makers and design professionals are not the only ones crafting urban place. Calls abound to recognise the everyday production of space. Carr and Servon (2009: 29), for example, stress that economic development plans should work to maintain vernacular culture to avoid homogenising the urban fabric. Indeed as many authors have detailed (see Zukin 1982, 1995), processes of neighbourhood change often push out what was interesting about the neighbourhood to begin with. Accordingly, though these shops may vex urban branding visions, they do appeal to others: those who possess different notions of taste, who are drawn to the particular vitalities of the shops' clutter, or who just want to buy milk somewhere besides the Tesco. These notions are not class restrictive – indeed, chain shops are often cheaper for the consumer. Though the vitality of the shops is not that imagined by the BIDs or high street revitalisation policy documents, it does, however, challenge the idea of "the death of the high street" in its own way. As I argue in Chapters Five and Six, the shops are sites of creative practice, where commercial activities are personalised, matter is re-energised through maintenance, and brands are recast to bring local meaning. These streets are alive with the shops' vibrant materials and ad hoc innovations.

The difference of these shops and their distinct vitality emerges from their material and practice. In Chapter Five, which follows, I describe the shop as a co-production of material and labour and begin to ask how the shop might be recognised.

5

Keeping the ad hoc shop:

Everyday practices of vernacular curation

Shopkeeping is an ad hoc practice that works in dialogue with vibrant material. Stocking and storing, crafting signage and displays, making do and mending, strategising, making change, and waiting: these everyday activities produce the micro-geographies of the shop. Tasks are mundane and instinctive, but through them, the embodied knowledge of shopkeepers generates understandings not unlike the rationalised knowledge enrolled in more conventional shops and advocated by retail science. There is method in the ad hoc-ness of the shop. There is personality too. Together, an agentic world of matter and the creative resourcefulness of the shopkeeper co-produce the shop. Shops are alive with unruly matter, but also represent economies of attention, where shopkeepers tune into material, both rationally and unconsciously, with attentiveness and sincerity.

Opening up

This chapter highlights the creative labour and material abundance of these shops. It is particularly concerned with the ad hoc practices of shopkeeping and how these practices enrol forces, materials, and keepers from the shops and beyond them. It highlights at once how commercial practices are made personal through the creative acts of curation, and also how shopkeeping is shaped by – and shapes – materials, logics, and conventions.

Shopkeeping is a recognisable coming together of elements: materials, competences, and meanings (Shove et al. 2012: 14). Its daily tasks become, and emerge from, practice. Here, I draw from the theories of practice described in Chapter Three to understand the work and shape of the shops. I show how this work is relational and expressive. Each task is held, and made meaningful, in constellation with others, creating an interdependent taskscape (Ingold 1993). Together, the tasks of shopkeeping constitute acts of dwelling, which put these ad hoc assemblages in motion. Through stocking, storing, labelling, displaying, merchandising, cleaning, selling, and whiling away time, I illustrate how the social and aesthetic characteristics of the shops emerge. Through these practices of shopkeeping, shopkeepers come to know the materials of the shop, first through their bodies (Ingold 2000). These materials are vibrant. They shape practices and participate in the emergence of things (Bennett 2010; Ingold 2010c; Hallam & Ingold 2007); ad hoc design enrols the bodies of shopkeepers and what is at hand.

In sympathy with an ethnomethodological approach, here I explore what shopkeeping practice is and how it is organised (Laurier 2008: 123; also see Garfinkel 2002). The wider politics of shopkeeping and the connections to larger contexts – like the forces of global branding, financial precarity, and translocalism – are drawn out in subsequent chapters. Here, I attend to the intimate work and day-to-day rhythms of shopkeeping. As Shove and her colleagues (2012) remind us, studies of practice must begin with practices themselves. Furthermore, the feeling and textures of place, and liveness of the present, are meaningful in themselves (Stewart 2007). By staying close to practices on the ground, I pay attention to movements, gestures, and conversations in the shops. I also tune into the material of the shop through image-making. These practices and materials are revealing, but most often reveal themselves in their ordinariness (Stewart 2007).

First, then, I detail how practices of stocking up and storing goods exhaust available space and engage with more logistical material forms. Then, I turn to the variegated practices of signage, pricing and display, which show the immediacy of shopkeeping and illustrate how the embodied engagements of keepers move products through and around the shop. In the third section, I illustrate some of the logics of keeping shop and argue that some of the practices in ad hoc shops that are learned through the experiences of the body resonate with the strategies of retail science. In the penultimate section, I explore the shops as worlds of making do and maintenance. I outline how this work is enabled by material affordances and how it responds to material decline, putting minor materials to work in the process. This section also describes how dirt and weather are addressed in some practice. Finally I outline some rhythms of the shop: the ringing-in, making change, and waiting. Throughout the chapter, and in a brief conclusion, I argue that these are spaces of vernacular creativity (Edensor et al. 2010) – made personal through practice – but also places where creativity is distributed and grounded in the shop. Furthermore, I argue that these shops represent economies of attention, where the shopkeepers and objects attend the shop in various ways.

Before we re-enter the shops, it should be noted that many of the activities outlined here are not shared across all shops. Moreover, the activities I describe are not exhaustive; they always change. Each shopkeeper, and the material of each shop, engages in its own developing patterns of doing. Though "linked by common and orchestrated items" (Schatzki 2010: 129), the actions and tasks that constitute shopkeeping transform. Despite change within and between shops, some conventions and materials are shared across the neighbourhood, contributing at times to a sense of shared character. The practices of shopkeeping, engendering daily tasks, retail conventions, and fiscal logics, create retail landscapes which are familiar to London's streets. Ad hoc and changing, yet familiar.

In the neighbourhood, 79 shopkeepers open their premises each morning. Some turn keys in rusty locks to open kiosks or roll back metal shutters that were bolted overnight. Lights are flicked on. Alarms deactivated. Out come the Wall's signs, the giant injection-moulded Cornettos, the sandwich boards, the racks of postcards, the matching wheelie luggage in multiple sizes, and wire stands filled with I "heart" London mugs. Each has a post in the forecourt which it returns to each day. Many shopkeepers unlock the metal newspaper boxes in front of their businesses to collect the morning papers and magazines delivered in the early hours. The daily papers are laid out for display – maybe on the counter by the till, maybe in the wire racks in the forecourt. Kiosks explode; they are flipped inside out: panels stretch out from each surface and wire rectangles and metal boards of magnets are brought from inside out. Pegs are hooked onto metal grids to hang T-shirts and handbags, umbrellas and mugs. The float is put in the register. Maybe it's counted, but maybe not. Often the same shopkeeper closed up the night before. In any case, it's time to start the day.

– Field notes, 17 August 2012

Stocking & storing

A shop needs stock, and vendors are shoppers too (see Gregson & Crewe 1997). Things are sourced throughout London and beyond. Objects embark on complex journeys through chains of spaces and ownerships. Were we to "follow the things" (Cook et al. 2004), we would trace them through multiple sites of stocking up: the cash-and-carrys of East London, the shelves of larger retailers like Tesco, the souvenir expos at Emirates stadium, fruit wholesalers in Covent Garden and Spitalfields. Shopkeepers travel to these sites and directly transport goods to the shop – by car, by bus, by truck. Some shopkeepers also order in. Glossy catalogues displaying souvenirs arrive in the post. As described in Chapter Six, thick laminated sheets displaying confectionary offers are waved in front of shopkeepers by representatives of Nestlé, Mars, and Cadbury. Some go online. The products touted in catalogues and by representatives similarly arrive at shopkeepers' doors. While some of this movement happens during the day, some of the backstage work of stocking up also happens at night. This is a different sort of night-time economy (Bianchini 1995; Rowe 2008; Rowe & Bavinton 2011). A nocturnal infrastructure supports the provision of daytime shops.

> Mohammad tells me about his visit to the cash-and-carry last night: lots of crisps on offer; new chocolate bars; a different brand of lighters. It's always open late: 24/7 during special periods, like the Olympics. When else would he shop? He works during the day. Plus, late night purchases and drop-offs help avoid the congestion charge. With a grin on his face, he tells me about driving right up on the pavement to the shop door to unload the boot. The city is his in the wee hours. No one's around to fuss. It provides quiet time in the shop too, without customers about. A good time to work through any major redesigns of shops too. All this before a 7:30am start.
>
> – Field notes, 1 August 2012

Before they are displayed for purchase, products are shifted like blocks of merchandise to be accommodated; they are logistical challenges needing storing, stacking, and shelving. Shopkeepers warn of the balance between stocking and overstocking the shop, but tempting offers and large infrequent deliveries mean volumes of goods wax and wane. Space is valuable, and storage difficult. Boxes, flats, and bags of stuff weave through the micro-geographies of the shop (Gregson et al. 2002a). They find their way into crawl spaces, newspaper boxes, and back rooms. They are stacked on the pavement, in basements, in closets of adjacent churches, and in shopkeepers' bedrooms. The seat of the wooden stool in a kiosk flips open to reveal a storage cavity. Fruit vendors dress tables in imitation grass not only for the sake of convention and allusions of freshness, but because these Astroturf tablecloths conceal boxes and crates below. Product bulging from under tables and slipping down from overhead


taxi
Mon - Sun
at any time
Bus lane
cameras
Dole
Fyffes

sills seems arbitrary, desperate at times, but there are logics to the way things are stored. In a convenience kiosk, for example, cans of soft drinks are often stored upside down until there is space in the fridge. This avoids collecting dust that kicks up from the road.

The location of storage is also related to the value of goods. In their exploration of charity shops, Gregson and her colleagues (2002a) discuss how zones of the shop – the shop floor, the back room and window – are differentiated through material, but also practice. They discuss how the back room is a space of exchange where value shifts. At an even more micro scale, different storage practices and particular materials take place along various surfaces of the shop.

When I arrive at his shop, Amid is drafting up a "closed" sign in red marker on lined A4. He tells me they're expecting a large delivery today, and although the shop will look open, they will have to close for business once the truck arrives. There is no storage space at the discount store – no closets, or back room... not even a toilet. When the weekly delivery comes, boxes of goods are put in the aisles. The shop will remain closed until all the goods are accommodated on the shop shelves. This is done in haste. The shop doesn't want to miss a sale. This sheds some light on why the shop feels so overwhelmed with product.

– Field notes, 20 June 2012

The shop is brimming. Deliveries anticipate the busy period to come – the Olympics are now over and people will come back from their holidays soon. It was challenging, but the decision was made to stock up on drinks and confectionary instead of on cigarettes. The flats of bottles are piled along the back wall. We can hardly move inside. I have to shuffle sideways, otherwise my hips press against the flats of Coke on one side and the drinks fridge on the other as I walk past. I only just slide by. Daleel goes to work shifting stock to the crawl space up top. He opens the ladder kept by the till and moves a wooden panel in the ceiling to reveal the opening. Throughout the shop, goods are stored according to value. The more expensive things – cigarettes and chocolate bars – are stored above. The bottles of water will be put in the newspaper box outside, no longer used for papers. Recently the £10 Lycamobile vouchers were shifted to the cash register. Now these won't get confused with the £5 vouchers kept with the calling cards in the little Extra gum box by the till.

– Field notes, 14 August 2012


GRAYS INN ROAD WC1
Carlsberg
GRAYS INN WINES
VENUS 7
276 GRAYS INN ROAD
OFF LICENCE
BEERS, WINES & SPIRITS
PROBABLY THE BEST LAGER IN THE WORLD
Play here
Now available here!
oyster Buy or top up your Oyster here.
Transport for London
oyster Ticket Stop
epay
Lyca mobile
BUY IT HERE & USE TODAY


GRAYS INN ROAD WC1
273
Carlsberg
GRAYS INN WINES
VENUS 7
276 GRAYS INN ROAD
PROBABLY THE BEST LAGER IN THE WORLD
BEERS, WINES & SPIRITS
oyster Buy or top up your Oyster here.
Transport for London
oyster Ticket Stop
£60
FREE

Flats of soda are stacked, boxes of t-shirts are piled, and bags of candy packages are crammed into tight spaces. The materials jostled about during these practices are made for this sort of wear. Material anticipates practice. The surfaces designed for the logistical manoeuvers of shopkeeping have a different composition than the packages inside destined for the consumers' touch. They are less sensual and ergonomic. The uncoated corrugated cardboard box that transports the Hula Hoops feels rough and has a flattened matte quality when compared to the 48 shiny foil handypacks inside. These containers are designed to support the things on their indeterminate journeys from the factory to the shop floor. This layer of packaging protects commodities in their state of in-between-ness. The various boxes, bags, and sheaths are part of the micro-infrastructures of the shop. They have a logistic materiality that homogenises difference (on the materiality of shipping container logistics see Martin 2012, 2013). While they are required to be robust, they are also made as cheaply as possible.

The box of pashminas sits open on the pavement. The corrugated cardboard is unmarked save for some digits printed in black on the side. One of the bottom corners is crushed in. The sides bulge out slightly. This once regular cube has a rounded softness. It is a tired box. I lift a clear plastic envelope from the box. There must be a hundred pashminas inside. The pashmina is folded, two to a package, in neat rectangles which extend to the edges of the plastic. I slip my index finger under the flap, releasing it from its thin strip of adhesive. I hear the particular timbre of thin crinkly packaging as the clear plastic wrapper bursts open. There's a second thinner plastic liner inside. A rip and a tip of the package and the cloths slide swiftly out. The density of the fibers weighs on my fingertips. This contact brings my attention back to the texture of the packaging, which stands starkly against the soft fabric of the textiles inside. It's uncertain if the shawls are really "cashmere and silk" as claimed on their tags, but they feel soft and glossy to the touch. I infer their cheapness only by the packages in which they arrived. Maybe too by the price.

– Field notes, 17 August 2012

Some Tic Tacs arrive in the shop today – held firmly together in two tight rows by thin cardboard boxes. All together in their box, they feel like a solid brick. They are dense and surprisingly heavy. With the compact block in my hand, I look over the display and assess the shortage. If there were no Tic Tacs on the display rack already, I might rejig the other products so I could slip the whole box on the shelf, but the shelf isn't empty of older product. I remove the lid in order to replenish three packs of the Fresh Mint flavour. As soon as the packs are removed from the box in my hand, the fragility of its cardboard sides becomes apparent. The cardboard bows as I brace it with my thumb. Without their neighbours to hold them up, a couple other packs in the box flop over. The box's flimsiness suggests its intended longevity. The Tic Tac containers, on the other hand are designed thick and robust – for the satisfaction of the consumer's touch. How long might someone have that box in their pocket or purse, I wonder. There's a paradox here, in that we will likely use the cardboard box in the kiosk much longer than a consumer will keep the box of Tic Tacs. We'll use it in the display rack, for Tic Tacs or Oreo cookies maybe, or to hold calling cards behind the cash. Precarity here means that the box will undoubtedly be in use much longer than it was designed for.

– Field notes, 1 August 2012

Signage, pricing & display

Meanings of objects shift as delivered goods become products on display. Practices of unwrapping and unpacking feel like rituals of transformation. Something changes the moment a "value pack" of Polo Mint rolls is burst open, or when an orange plastic net is cut and one hundred onions tumble out, or when the perforations on corrugated cardboard boxes are pushed through to reveal the cut case displays and shiny bags of crisps inside. These practices signal a shift from the product as an object of logistics – one that is bought, transported, stacked, and stored – to an object of display and consumer good. Be it a chocolate bar, onion, or snow globe, at these moments, the objects are revealed in their final iteration in the shop. This transformation gives way to different meanings and material.

Once on display, labels and signage attract, promote, communicate, and legitimise products. Across shops, labelling practices vary. One corner shop displays uniform computer-generated, laminated posters, which – in Copperplate Gothic, all-caps – broadcast the presence of souvenirs, drinks, sweets, alcohol, and the cost of postcards. A few blocks away, CANS 60p is scrawled in red marker on the back of a recycled flyer. Within a spectrum of signage practices, shops balance aesthetic concerns, the sensitivities of time, and the resources available. Many shops keep some signage loose and impermanent. Even under the Copperplate Gothic laminates, a chalkboard communicates the changing price of beer. Some shopkeepers I met admit they consider more permanent signage, but worry their prices and products change too often, making laminated signs quickly obsolete. In most ad hoc shops, both stock and prices shifts as suppliers change and new products come to market. Certain offers too change to lure customers to the shop. The immediacy of a handmade sign or chalkboard works with the transitory nature of the business. Though it seems ephemeral – like the box of Tic Tacs – some of this signage persists much longer than originally anticipated.

In content, the signage and labels endeavour to attract. Special deals lure customers and encourage more sales: "£2.99 or 4 for £10", "0.25p or 10 for £2.00". Contrasting colours make the text pop: red on white, black on neon orange. Starburst cut-outs bring attention to prices on bright card. Methods of production are evident in the material of signage. Contours of some hand drawn letters are telling. In some cases, you can feel the way the marker was gripped in the hand and see where strokes were retraced to smoothen out a shaky line or perhaps to broaden the thin stroke of a biro pen. In other work, you can sense the bouncy rhythm of graceful mark making. Particular words are underlined: "enjoy," "only," "fresh." Signs are embellished with abstract designs or small pictograms – the silhouette of an umbrella by its price, or a quick line drawing of a jacket potato. These may tell as much about the boredom of the shopkeepers as their aesthetic preferences.


SIM
AND
TOP-UP
AVAILABLE
HERE
£5.75
Chesterfield
KING SIZE
seriously harms you
around you
seriously harms
around you
£7.59


KEYS CUT
SHOE REPAIRS
UMBRELLA £2.99 EACH
SHOE REPAIRS
LADIES STILETTO HEEL REPAIR £6 EACH PAIR
CHILDRENS WATCHES £3 EACH OR TWO FOR £5
Shoe Repairs . Key C


ROLL OVER
Play here
The National Lottery
EUROMILLION
FRIDAY
27
MILLIONS


LEMON
.35p each
GARLIC
Origin: SPAIN
Class: I
Size: 40mm+
3 BULBS


CAN
PEPSI
60'


1664
5
FOR
£5.49
CARLSBERG
5
FOR
£5.49
ITALIAN WINE
ONLY £2.99


FRUITS
Banana 39p each
GRAPES 4.99 kg.
ORANGE 1.99 kg.
APPLES (Red) 50p each
APPLES (Pink) 40p each
APPLES (Green) 40p each
CLEMENTINE 1.99 kg.
PEARS 2.99 kg.
Tomato 2.49 kg.
LEMON 35p each
PLUMS 3.99 kg.
CHERRY 6.99 kg.


London
SALE
WAS ~~1.99~~
NOW 99p


WALL'S
WALL'S
JACKET
POTATOES
BEST IN TOWN
FROM 2 00 POUNDS


Have A Nice Day
Thank You!
COFF
TEA-HOT C
COFFEE
FROM
1
UMBRELLA
MAP OF LONDON
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
UNDERGROUND
RAIL MAP
STREET DIRECTORY
GALLERIES
MONUMENTS
durex


WATER MELON
ONLY £1
neapples
COUNT: 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
melons
Product of Costa Rica
DULCE
MELONS
(cucumis melo)
HONEYDEW

In anticipation of their expiry, Daleel suggests we make a special display for the pistachios. With 40 packages to move within the next few weeks, we get to work. Though of excellent quality, they have been slow to sell, hanging on the back wall of the kiosk. Daleel suggests creating a display on the counter by the cash: front and centre. With a pair of scissors, he traces along the diagonal perforations designed into the box, revealing the cut case display unit. A flap of cardboard sticks up the back, just waiting for a sign. "2 for £2.20" has a nice ring to it, Daleel reckons. He charges me with the task of drafting up the bill. I insist on doing it on a separate piece of paper, in case I mess up writing directly on the cardboard. I rummage around on the back shelf and find an old SIM card promo flyer which has a plain white glossy back. There are no markers in the kiosk, so I use my ball-point pen – going over and over my own lines to make them thick and even. It is my first display assignment so I take my time, but my care has as much to do with the feeling of the day: the shop is slow, we're a bit bored, it's a bit exciting and something to do.

– Field notes, 31 July 2012


Kinder bueno White
SPECIAL OFFER!
2 for £2.20
Wonderful
unite the UNION
AUSTERITY ISN'T WORKING


SPECIAL OFFER!
2 for £2.20
Wonderful PISTACHIOS
Wonderful


SPECIAL OFFER!
2 for £2.20
Wonderful
PISTACHIOS
100% California
Wonderful®
Poppell

At the level of individual product, items are not always labeled. But doing so adds some legitimacy to the business, I was told (field notes, 19 June 2012). It builds trust with customers. "Like a real shop". Shopkeepers admitted to me that cash businesses can be dodgy. The ad hoc-ness of the shops pervades their economic practices as well. Without price tags, costs may increase for tourists or levies may be added to the cost of some goods and pocketed by staff. It is embarrassing for some owners, who sometimes feel cheated by their employees, but a common practice.

I sit anxiously as Daleel talks to someone at the kiosk. They argue in Bengali. I organise the calling cards. Daleel asks for £35 from the till. I pass it to him. The man asks for a Red Bull. Daleel passes him a Boost (the kiosk's budget energy drink option). "It's an employee" Daleel tells me, when the man leaves, "the one who keeps taking products during his shift." Daleel tells of discovering wrappers tucked under the seat and empty cans in the bin. This fellow's request for a Red Bull signalled his sense of entitlement, Daleel says… his belief that he can take liberally from the shop. He asked for £70, but Daleel only gave him half of that – in part because of his consumption, but also because he closed at 5:30 instead of 7:30 every day last week. "He'll never work again."

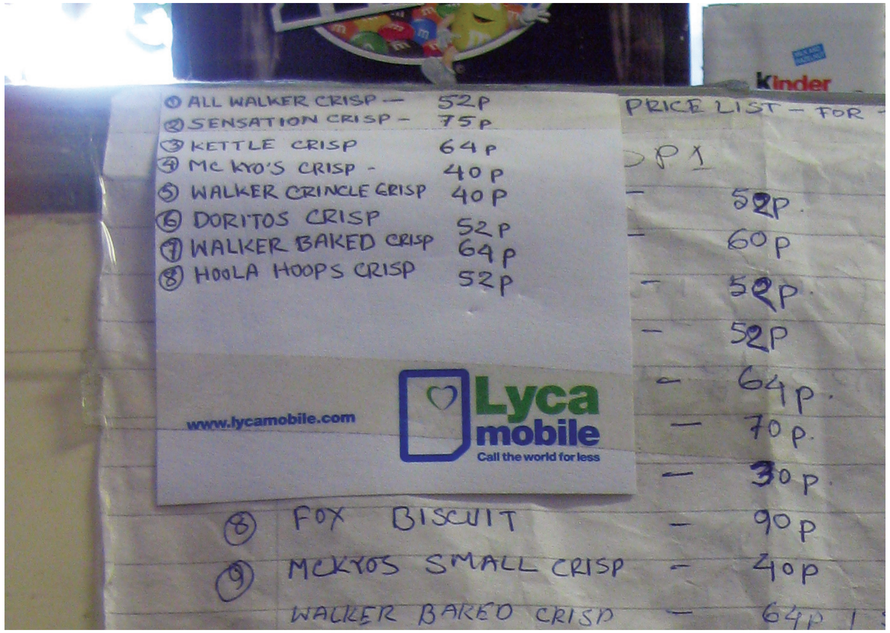
– Field notes, 23 August 2012

In a cash business, money is more fluid and prices unfixed. Between sips of his milky tea, Mo tells me of his brother who came from Pakistan a while back. He wanted to open a business of his own in London, so, to help him save, Mo tucked away his weekly salary. Mo's wife got anxious about her brother-in-law's long hours and one day found £4,800 under his bed. Mo took the money. His brother was enraged, but Mo told him clearly that the money wasn't his. Mo explains the practice to me: charging a little more on each sale… A £60 bag becomes £65, and so on. Employees remove signs and come up with their own inflated prices. This is done by all of his employees, he says. He's sure of it. As well as adding a bit here and there, employees also pocket money from sales outright. He set up an inventory system for a time, but when it was in place, the guys didn't hustle. A £500 day became a £150 day. There is a commission system put in place, but it doesn't provide adequate incentive. He tells about a period when he worked at the kiosk on his own when he realised its potential and the problems with the staff. It gnaws at him, but what can be done, he wonders. He needs employees who have a greater fear of god, he says.

– Field notes, 18 July 2012

"I don't cheat with other people," he says. "I only cheat myself, when feeling lazy, maybe. I'm from a corrupt country, but I don't do any corruption. If I drink four bottles of water here, I'll bring eight to replace them. But not everyone is the same." Recently, Daleel started putting price tags on products to stop his employee from charging arbitrary amounts and pinching the surplus. He also adds price tags to the display boxes for the products. He adds them to the top layer of items in the boxes. As the products are sold, more tags are added. These prices are also listed on a sheet kept behind the till, with the price changes evident. The price tags are for consumers too, he tells me… to build trust, so they know they aren't getting fleeced. But the price tag machine isn't working well. We play around with it. It over-inks so the tags get blotchy and are sometimes printed off-centre. Sometimes he uses it. Sometimes he writes on the stickers. When the shop opened they printed some with a computer. The ad hoc-ness of the tools lends to an ad hoc-ness of practice and an ad hoc-ness in the material result.

– Field notes, 19 July 2012

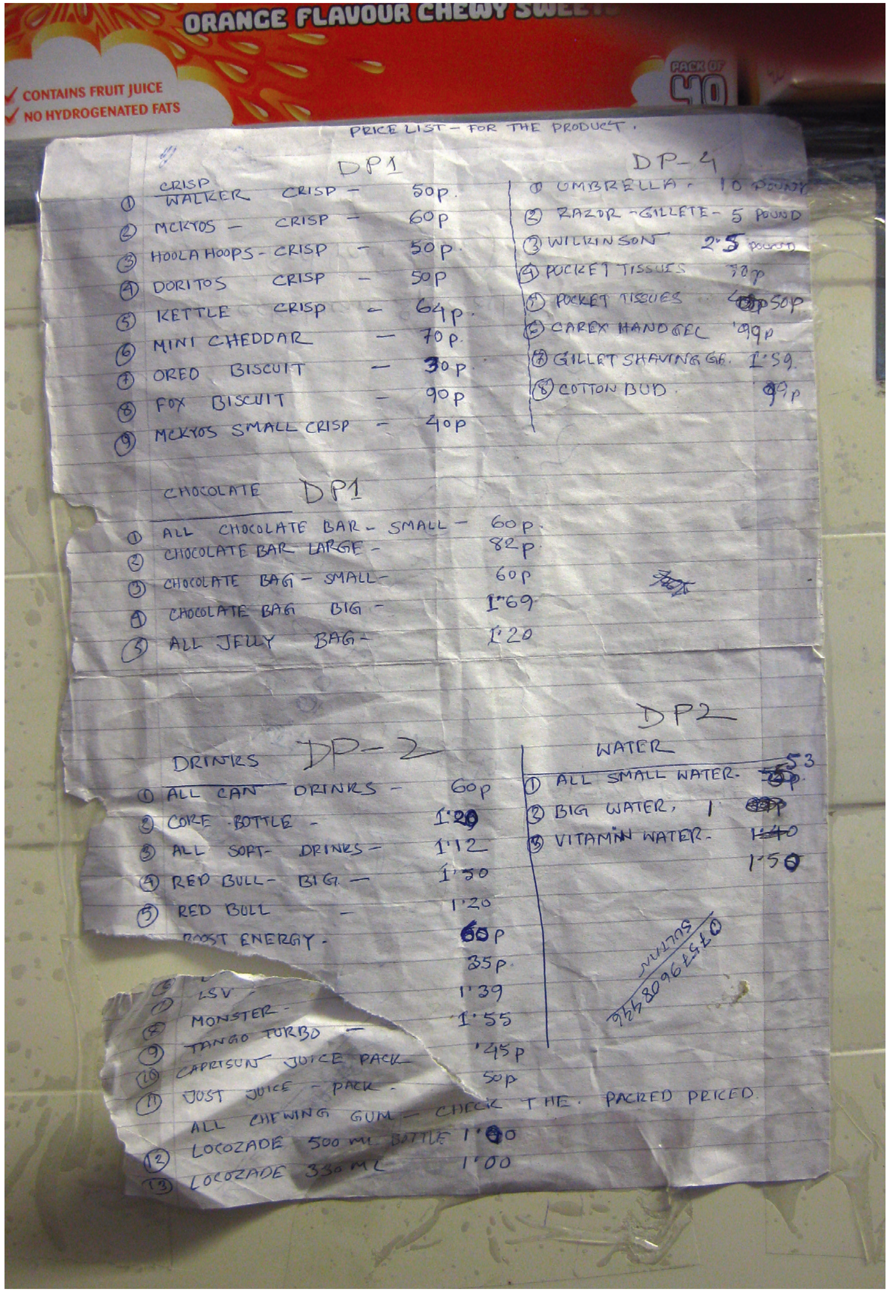


①	ALL WALKER CRISP –	52P
②	SENSATION CRISP –	75P
③	KETTLE CRISP	64P
④	Mc KYO'S CRISP -	40P
⑤	WALKER CRINCLE CRISP	40P
⑥	DORITOS CRISP	52P
⑦	WALKER BAKED CRISP	64P
⑧	HOOLA HOOPS CRISP	52P

PRICE LIST – FOR

DP1

	–	52P.
	–	60P
	–	52P.
	–	52P
	–	64P.
	–	70P.
	–	30P.
⑧	FOX BISCUIT –	90P
⑨	MCKYOS SMALL CRISP –	40P
	WALKER BARED CRISP –	64P



PRICE LIST – FOR THE PRODUCT.

DP1

①	CRISP WALKER CRISP –	50P.
②	MCKYOS – CRISP –	60P
③	HOOLA HOOPS – CRISP –	50P.
④	DORITOS CRISP –	50P
⑤	KETTLE CRISP –	64P.
⑥	MINI CHEDDAR –	70P.
⑦	OREO BISCUIT –	30P.
⑧	FOX BISCUIT –	90P
⑨	MCKYOS SMALL CRISP –	40P

DP-4

①	UMBRELLA.	10 POUND
②	RAZOR – GILLETE –	5 POUND
③	WILKINSON	2'5 POUND
④	POCKET TISSUES	70P
⑤	POCKET TISSUES	~~40P~~ 50P
⑥	CAREX HAND GEL	'99P
⑦	GILLET SHAVING GE.	1'59.
⑧	COTTON BUD.	99P

CHOCOLATE DP1

①	ALL CHOCOLATE BAR – SMALL –	60P.
②	CHOCOLATE BAR LARGE –	82P.
③	CHOCOLATE BAG – SMALL –	60P
④	CHOCOLATE BAG BIG –	1'69.
⑤	ALL JELLY BAG –	1'20

DRINKS DP-2

①	ALL CAN DRINKS –	60P
②	COKE BOTTLE –	1'20
③	ALL SOFT – DRINKS –	1'12
④	RED BULL – BIG –	1'50
⑤	RED BULL –	1'20
	BOOST ENERGY.	60P
		35P.
⑥	LSV –	1'39
⑦	MONSTER –	1'55
⑧	TANGO TURBO –	'45P
⑨	CAPRISUN JUICE PACK	50P
⑩	JUST JUICE – PACK.	
⑪	ALL CHEWING GUM – CHECK THE. PACKED PRICED.	
	LOCOZADE 500 ML BOTTLE	1'00
⑫	LOCOZADE 330 ML	1'00
⑬		

DP2

WATER

①	ALL SMALL WATER.	~~55P~~ 53
②	BIG WATER,	1 [illegible]
③	VITAMIN WATER.	~~1'40~~ 1'50

SULTAN
[illegible]


£3·75

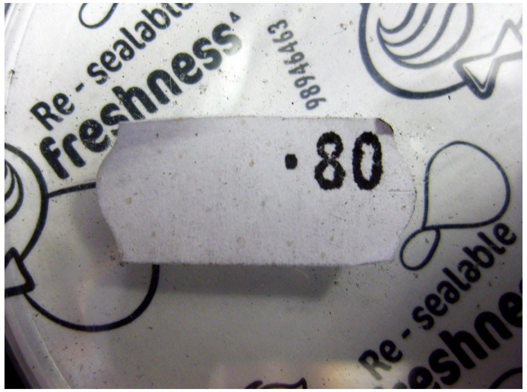

£00·90


£4·10


£ ·99


1·69


£ 1·5


Re-sealable
freshness
·80


£ 72
WRIGL


£ ·72


4·10
MARLBO
RO


BES 600
50p


1·05
EY'S


45P
30 TEN PIECE


£3·90
CUTTERS


RIZLA RED REGULAR
65P


PIRITEZE
2.76


1·20


0
6
9

Ad hoc shops are sites of vernacular practice where bodies tend to material to keep goods in motion. Objects in ad hoc shops are on the move. Things in the shop vibrate with their own energy and shift in the hands of the shopkeepers. At one scale, the swift movement of goods through the shop is the objective of all shopkeepers – from delivery, to storage, to shelf, to carrier bag. At a micro-level: a pack of gum is flipped so its logo aligns with the pack next to it; a pashmina is moved half an inch back so the one underneath can also be seen; a fridge magnet is shifted slightly to fill a gap on the board; a box of Mars bars is combined with a box of Snickers; a Diana head postcard is rotated right way up; a plastic cup of cherries is righted after spilling; a canopy is extended slightly so it casts a shadow on the fruit in the forecourt. These movements tweak displays, groom surfaces, and keep a tidy shop.

Beyond the minute shifts in object orientation, groups of objects are curated to help sales. As discussed in the next section, merchandising sees products moved to spots of high traffic and visibility to attract attention. These changes, which punctuate everyday rhythms, relate to the type of shop. In souvenir shops, for example, there is a constant movement of goods to the best spots for display. In corner shops, locals do not want to search the shelves to locate their Minstrels each visit, so many regular products remain in place. When shifts in merchandising do occur, the rotation may relate to their price, availability, the weather, special events, and expiry dates, as detailed above. The curation of these new displays is often accompanied by the production of extra signage and infrastructure. In the ad hoc assemblage, any material introduction or modification means shopkeeping activities and other materials shift to accommodate.

> Crunchie bars are a new addition to the kiosk. They were on offer at the cash-and-carry during last night's run. Accommodating them requires a degree of rejigging. By the till, we keep a box of "randoms": the last few packages of various products. After a quick assessment of the confectionary, we add the remaining M&Ms and Planets to the countertop assortment and remove the boxes to make way for the Crunchie bars. The box containing the remainders – a recycled Kinder Bueno box – looks a bit grim. It's dirty and too deep for the paltry selection of goods it contains. I remove all the packages – three different kinds of Skittles and some rolls of Rowntree Fruit Pastilles – and dust them. While I clean the packages, Daleel uses scissors to cut down the edges of the Bueno box so the products inside will be more visible to the consumers. He bangs out the dust on the pavement then props up the back of the box with a metal rod. This little boost compensates for the backwards slope of the countertop and improves visibility.
>
> – Field notes, 14 August 2012


www.ly
020
Lyca
mobile
Call the world for les

It's the last day of July. For the last two weeks, three boxes of Halls have bowed and bulged, forced into a three-tiered Plexiglas case beside the till. It's the most prominent spot for probably the least saleable products. The boxes were moved here in anticipation of their expiration. The turquoise Halls expire today. Over the last couple weeks they are priced at 35p instead of 45p like the others. Plus they're in the hottest spot in the kiosk. Still, they're heavy on the shelves. After closing, we throw them in the bin. "Shrinkage," Daleel says with a shrug. It's hard to avoid. We did all we could.

– Field notes, 31 July 2012

While some shopkeepers aren't as fussed with expiration dates, Daleel was astonishingly accurate when quizzed. Like the dates stored in his head, the shapes of objects are stored in his body. Shifting matter around the shop is performed with an embodied knowledge. Stacking, shelving, pricing, selling, bagging, cleaning – the objects are known through touch and the practices of shopkeeping. These skills cannot be ascribed to the bodies of individual shopkeepers, but emerge from relations that those bodies have in their environments (Ingold 2000: 291). The knowledge of the objects is grown in dialogue with the shop, which becomes part of the shopkeepers' muscular consciousness (Bachelard 1994). As objects are displayed, each is held, positioned, shifted. In this way, shopkeeping practice expresses the "textility of making" described by Ingold (2010c: 92) as "the tactile and sensuous knowledge of line and surface that had guided practitioners through their varied and heterogeneous materials." Understanding the shape and weight and texture of objects assists in the curation of seamless displays, free of gaps. This understanding of the tactile qualities of the shop is akin to Rodaway's (1994: 51) micro haptic geographies of habituation, where "surface texture, the solidity of objects, relative size and form, and moving through space [uses] a kind of haptic map." With an intimate understanding of the objects, like little puzzle pieces, Daleel can look at a gap in the Wrigley's gum rack and say with certainty: "that is the exact width of an Oreo cookie package…"

Tetris is called The Brick Game, in Bangladesh. "Isn't that what it feels like," I ask, "Moving stock around the shop?" Shiny little rectangular prisms slide along others towards holes in the display. They snap into place. The branded foil packages of gum are smooth to the touch. Of course they are. They were designed to feel right in the hand. They slip over each other effortlessly. And… drop. Another perfect fit. Once the gum rack is organised – holes filled and extra stock moved out from the back shelves – my fingertips run over the surface of the counter display… along Chewits, Starburst, Lockets, and Soothers. I flip them as needed as I go. Their tactility and the process of turning them help to know what's next… Are there enough in the box as it is? How does it look? Should we bring stock out from the back shelf? Should they be combined with another product? We eye the counter. "It's looking good." Onto the drinks fridge – "Three, no, four more bottles of Coke," I request from in front of the kiosk. While Daleel is getting the stock from the back shelf, I take the bottles from the fridge. "First in first out"; always put the new stock at the back to avoid shrinkage. I balance the cold, damp bottles in my lap, holding the sliding fridge door open with my knee. The warm ones behind, the cold ones in front. It's clear which are cold, as my fingers make streaks through the condensation.

– Field notes, 16 August 2012

Logics of display

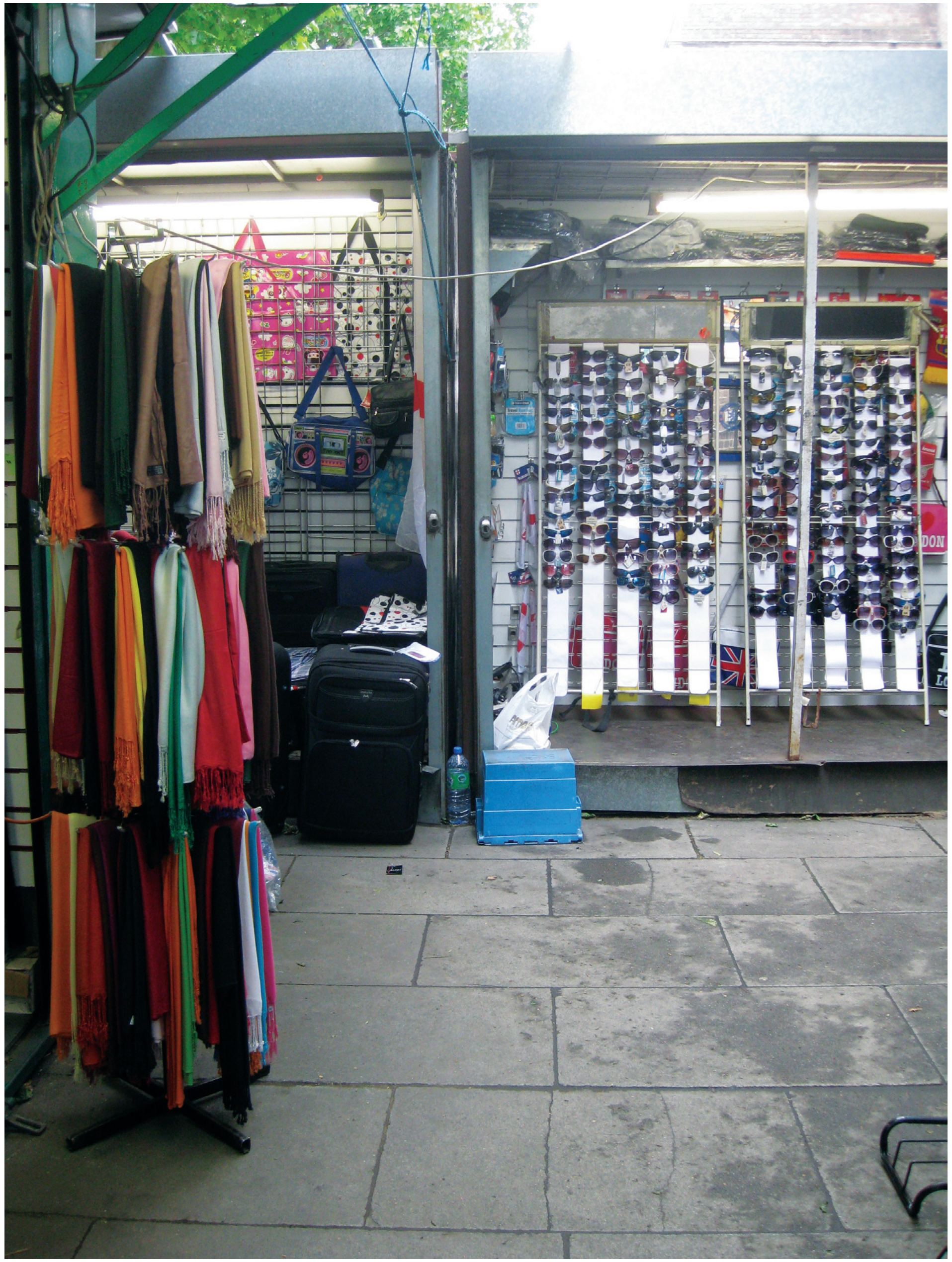
Though it is ad hoc, logics guide many practices of shopkeeping and display. While I examine these places in contrast to conventional retail environments, there is some overlap between the strategies in ad hoc shops and more groomed commercial spaces. I want to briefly sketch out some of the more mainstream approaches to display and consider how practices in ad hoc shops are the same and different. I contend that they differ mainly in the formal rationalisation of these specialist techniques, and that what can be read in a book, can also be learned through the body.

Though best practices in retail display in general – and window dressing in particular – have been prescribed by experts since the late 19th century, visual merchandising as a science emerged in the 1950s (Iarocci 2013; see also Morgan 2011). Definitions of visual merchandising vary by sector, but generally describe retail display practices that traditionally focus on the shop window, and more recently encompass the entire shop: the presentation of merchandise, in-store consumer communications, and the development of an evocative and affective retail environment (see Iarocci 2013; McGoldrick 2002; Pegler 2012; Tucker 2004). Of course, making products and environments more alluring in this way is meant to stimulate sales. Visual merchandising strategies differ too by sector – from the immersive "co-ordinated displays" of shops like IKEA that group items used together, to the "power aisles" of warehouse clubs that include large numbers of similar products to give the impression of low prices, displays are calculated (McGoldrick 2002). These retail display strategies carefully curate a shop through: colour, texture, line, and light; windows, props, and fixtures; special displays, graphics, and signage (see Pegler 2012).

Though their ad hoc-ness means shops do not observe conventions of comprehensive colour schemes and visual narratives, ad hoc shops demonstrate a tacit understanding of many display strategies recommended for "fast moving consumer goods." For example, shops develop themed displays around festive events, choose to create special displays over expanding shelf space to increase a product's sales, and hang products to maximise "air space" (Pegler 2012). Allocation of shelf space as proportionate to market share, a principle of retail and display management, was also discussed by the shopkeepers, though not in the same terms (on space elasticity see McGoldrick 2002). Additionally, as seen in the signage examples earlier in this chapter, in their own way, ad hoc shops use different signage strategies to communicate availability and aspects of the products they sell.


LINK
CASH MACHINE HERE
OMNICASH
£3.29
£3.29
CORN FLAKES
FAIRY
PANTENE
Kotex

KITCHEN ROLL £1/PACK
Cushion Soft toilet tissue
Perfumed
Scourer Balls
Kitchen Cloths
SUPER MOP BUCKET




HOLSTEN
5 FOR £5.49
POLSKI BEER
MIX & MATCH
4 FOR£5.49
BUDWISER
4 FOR £5.49
CARLING
5 FOR £5.49
STRONGBOW
5 FOR £5.49

Like many conventional retail spaces, most shopkeepers laud flush, even, regular planes of goods. "Avoid gaps," I am told. "Gaps look odd. In supermarkets, there are no gaps – they always make it level and they always face up" (field notes, 16 August 2012). The goods should look plentiful. "Organise products only one deep if that's all that's available. But make it look full." Filling gaps in the shops results in some peculiar orientations. In one food and wine shop, and as seen on the previous page, two bottles of white wine are slotted in besides rows of horizontally-oriented cans of beer. The gap is closed and the fit is good. But the wine bottles seem out of place in a fridge full of beer. This decision may relate more to maximising space in this crammed cooler than to aesthetics. Space is expensive. Every bit is used for display in the shops. In a shop by the British Museum, also pictured, products designed to lay flat and horizontally are placed vertically to maximise the space. Where there are ten gums oriented vertically, a shopkeeper could only put three horizontally. It is not optimal, but the best is done with the space at hand.

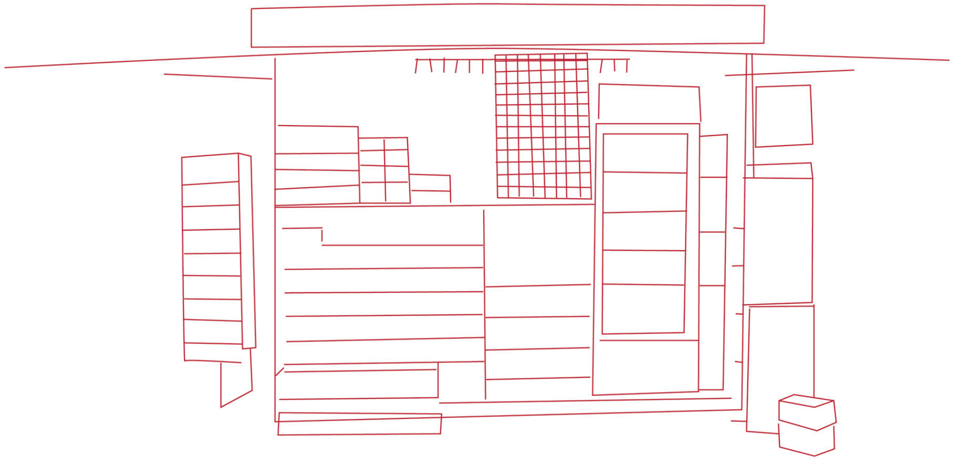
The cigarettes look full today – the straight edges of the boxes are pressed up against each other. They stand flush on both their x and z axes, creating a shiny plane against the rusty rail at the front of the shelf. It looks bursting at first glance, but, on more careful inspection, the bottom shelf sees packages of Mayfair standing shoulder to shoulder – only one deep – creating only an illusion of stock. These shelves aren't the plastic spring-loaded cigarette racks that some other shops have. We do the work of the springs. After I sell a pack, I slip my hand over the others to advance the whole row or shift packs from behind other rows to fill the gap. Without the right shelving, it's an awkward move and I often hit a few packs backward. When the kiosk is very quiet – as it often is – I fish around behind the cigarettes to right the packets that have fallen over. Sometimes I get lucky and find a pack or two.

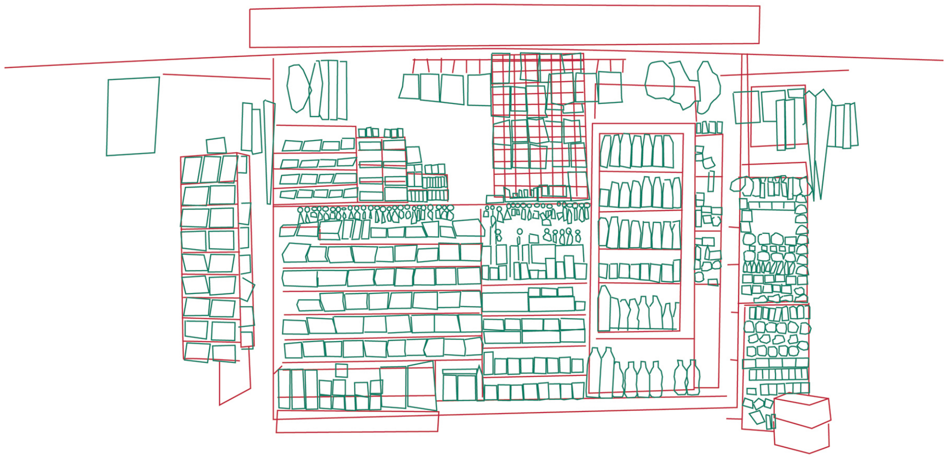
– Field notes, 7 August 2012


MAYFAIR
MAYFAIR
MAYFAIR

The aesthetic is ad hoc, sure, but there is also a regimented placement of things in the shop. The grid organises the shop's material richness – upwards and downwards, side to side. Products are regimented. The order seems to relate in part to the display infrastructure; shelves, pegs, fridges, and boxes keep things in line. It relates as well to the shapes of the products themselves; curated by the shopkeeper these rectilinear things invite a sequenced array. Superimposed, the infrastructure and objects establish aesthetic rules. Rules meant to be broken?

– Field notes, 18 June 2012






LONDON
LONDON ENGLAND
Lyca
Lyca


LONDON

None of the shopkeepers I encountered had trained in retail management or visual merchandising. Nonetheless, retail science was common sense in the shop. Celebrated mantras of retailing, like the four Ps – product, price, place, and promotion – are not the preserve of chain stores. Knowledge and practices of shopkeeping and display curation are intuitive, relying on conventions, experience, and the tacit understanding that works through the body. Indeed, when asked, shopkeepers refuted the notion of creative labour. One shopkeeper summed up the general sentiments when he said, "it's just normal" (field notes, 23 June 2012).

The logics of display and merchandising strategies are developed through the shopkeepers' daily practices: by watching people's eyes move across the products as they pass, by noticing where customers stand, by handling materials, by anticipating demand, and getting into the psychology of the consumer. For instance, shopkeepers want the shop to seem full, but perhaps not too full.

"The ramble and face-up" sounds like a sort of dance. It does have a pulse of its own. It's a rhythm felt through the body. This is Tesco-speak for reorganising things in the shop, I'm told – grouping like objects, filling holes in display, and flipping things so product names and logos are fully visible to the perusing eye. There is a joy in this aspect of shopkeeping, which is twofold. First, the rhythmic manual practice is almost meditative. Second, creating a flush plane of branded packages is satisfying. This feeling would probably be less pronounced if the shop wasn't slightly chaotic. But it mustn't look too good. After overzealous rambling and facing-up, my shopkeeping mentor corrected my work. "If you overdo it, it looks like no one has come. People will think: What's wrong with this product? Why does nobody want it?" Indeed, for the same reason, I would rip a paper finger off a handmade sign before taping it to a lamppost. Gestures are calculated, psychologies are considered; there are logics of display.

– Field notes, 25 July 2012

I later learn that these are called "starter gaps" by retail scientists. Counterintuitively – and fortuitously perhaps for ad hoc shops – "the most orderly displays do not achieve the best effects" (McGoldrick 2002: 475). But like the retail gurus, many shopkeepers discuss keeping like products together in displays. The gum is together, separate from chocolate bars, vegetables are together, separate from fruit, Olympic souvenirs are together, separate from Royal Wedding paraphernalia. This helps consumers navigate products and creates the right associations. Toiletries are never associated with tobacco, or food with SIM cards. In addition, within product categories, contrasting colours are used in the shops to help differentiate products from each other. "Put the red crisps between the green and blue." This makes products pop and ensures they are not confused. It offers clarity for the customer, I was told, and just looks better.

The souvenir shop opened just last week. It still smells like paint and sawn pressboard. There's a certain crispness to the displays too. The shopkeeper walks me around, explaining the rationalities of each display. Objects are first grouped by theme and then grouped by type of object. A Queen Elizabeth II mug, for example, is kept with the royal collection and not with the other mugs, which are kept together. Likewise, Olympic souvenirs are grouped together regardless of the form they take. The same logic applies to stationery, plush toys, and t-shirts. Will the firm adherence to these logics persist once the smell of paint has dissipated?

– Field notes, 20 June 2012

I ask about what looks good – can Daleel put his finger on it? "Whitechapel is not looking good" Daleel tells me, referring to the shops on the East London Street where he lives. "It looks like a hazard" mostly because the categories of products are not together. "It's not well organised; you'll have cookware in one place and the spoons in another side of the shop."

– Field notes, 6 August 2012


Post Box teapot
Big Ben teapot
Telephone box teapot
Bus teapot
Union Jack bus teapot
£19.99
£17.99
£12.99
£14.99
£9.99
£5.99

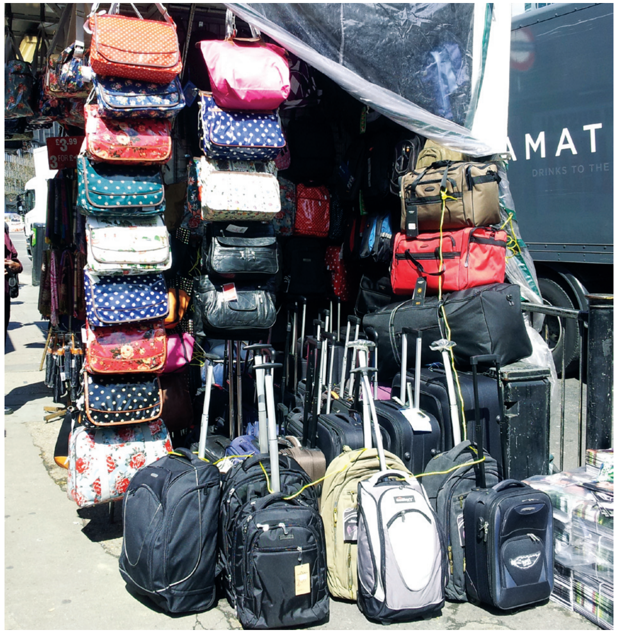

BIG BEN LONDON
LONDON


TELEPHONE
LONDON

We are restocking the pashminas today. Mo passes me the cloths one at a time. I unfold them once and then fold them once the other way before draping them over my shoulder to keep them flat and clean. We work with the existing folds pressed in the fabric. "Don't unfold it too much," Mo warns when I unfold it twice, "then it makes another crease." Before the pile on my shoulder gets dangerously large, I hang the folded pashminas on the cylindrical rack. After placing each one on the metal peg, I draw it down between my palms to smoothen it before placing another. "Use contrasting colours," Mo instructs. This requires some shifting about, as the pashminas come in identical packs of two. I turn the rack after I place each one to ensure the same patterns and colours aren't too close. Together we layer two, and then three, contrasting Pashminas on each peg, the lower one sticking out about three quarters of an inch beyond the one above. It's kaleidoscopic.

– Field note, 17 August 2012

Certain products see conventions for their displays and implicate particular display objects or props. Crisps are often displayed in wire racks or in cardboard boxes with punch out grab holes. T-shirts are displayed in grids of perfect folded squares. Novelty magnets are stuck on sheets of metal and on the side of drinks fridges. Some display strategies are replicated between local shops, or inspired by shops in other areas. One shopkeeper, for example, regularly visits kiosks in Camden market for inspiration. The display conventions for particular products often emerge from the material qualities of the things themselves and their packaging. As highlighted above, boxes designed for transport of goods often become display objects. The material sets the stage for the practice of display.



The display of produce is driven by its own set of logics, wrapped up in notions of value, aesthetics, and freshness. These practices have also shifted through time. Traders told me that in the 80s, fruit was displayed in bushel boxes. In these wooden boxes, the produce looked like it had just come in from the fields. Now almost every exterior display features imitation grass, which makes produce "look like it's just been picked" (field notes, 20 June 2012). This "symbol of freshness" (field notes, 22 August 2012) covers table tops, is stapled to wooden shelves, and is gathered and draped to skirt around tables.

While it might be easy to dismiss the turf as "fake" grass, it has unexpectedly sensual qualities. The ribbons of plastic Astroturf are soft to the touch and gleam in the light and wind, shimmering in rich tones of green. When new – fresh? – it can seem quite luxurious. Elsewhere, the turf shows time and use. It wears along creases and at edges, exposing the black weave beneath and eventually wearing into fine pin-striped skirts.

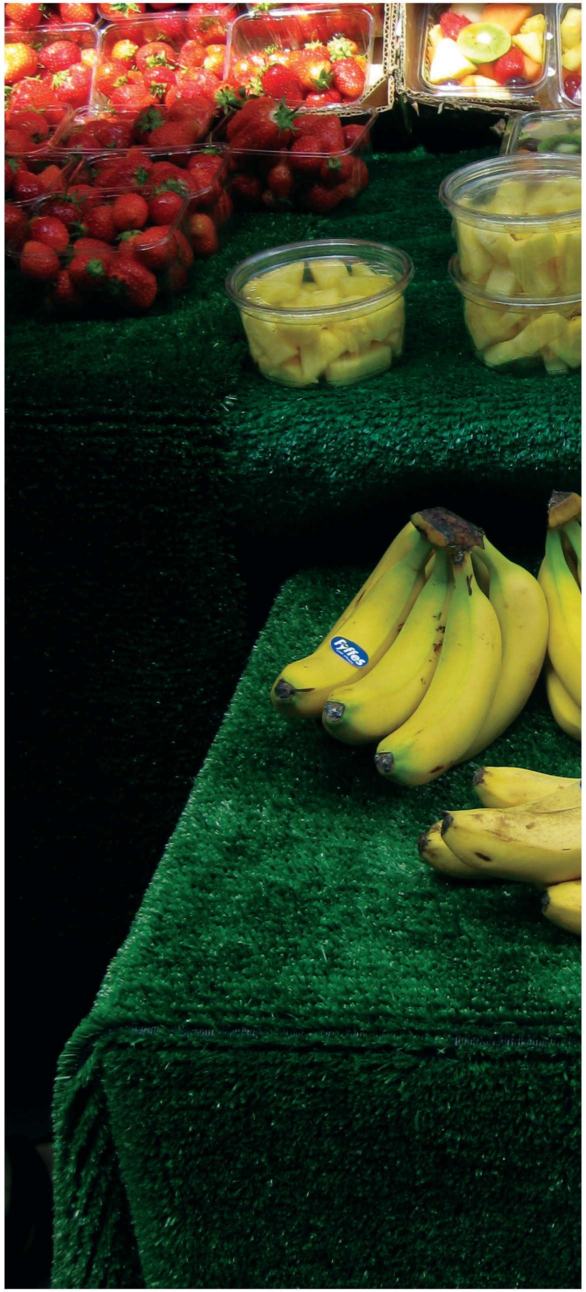
On top of the grass, vendors choose to use plastic crates, cardboard transport boxes, or plastic mixing bowls as part of their displays. Aesthetically, these have different results. The plastic bowls, for example, bring an orderliness and rhythm to fruit in many forecourts. Bands of contrasting colour work horizontally in some stalls, vertically in others. Display strategies are not merely aesthetic, but associated with specific practices. The bowls help sell fruit at a volume. They are cheap: always one bowl for one pound. But some vendors oppose the mixing bowls and believe customers do too.

"50p for a banana?!" I must have looked surprised, and why not when the guy a half block down sells a bowl full for one pound. He explains that this is a premium banana and that the fruit in most of the mixing bowl displays are bought from other retailers at a discount because it's almost expired. He prefers to sell his produce in boxes and believes consumers associate poor quality with the mixing bowl approach to display. His fruit is delivered every day and his consumers come for the service and quality. "I sell quality fruit. I would never put my produce in bowls like that." For me, the bananas were equally delicious.

– Field notes, 23 June 2012

Before selling apparel, Omar used to run the fruit stand next door. He is nostalgic about his time at the fruit stand – two metres away. He laments the shift to plastic mixing bowls from the boxes. Even when the mixing bowls were introduced, he liked making particular combinations of fruit in the bowls that would complement each other. He used to cut melon too, so people could eat it on the go instead of buying a whole fruit. Everyone has their own style, he says wistfully.

– Field notes, 20 June 2012

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Lyca


PRIDE
Solete


GoldCup
LaCalera
AVOCADOS
AVOCATS

As mentioned, like their corporate counterparts, ad hoc shops use themed displays that respond to local events and bring special objects into the shops. Between 2011 and 2013, numerous events were celebrated across London and in the shops. The Royal Wedding, the Jubilee, and the Olympics brought buzz to the streets and new merchandise to shops. Objects like Royal Wedding decorative plates, national flags, Queen Elizabeth II tea towels, and Olympic T-shirts were accommodated into existing displays. As noted previously, the objects associated with these events are often grouped and curated in special displays or focal points. These events offer opportunities for shopkeepers to increase sales. But the feeling in the shops seemed as much about creating a celebratory atmosphere as it is about flogging merchandise. Like the visual merchandisers and retail scientists, the shopkeepers here work to craft a particular affective experience in and around their shop, albeit ad hoc.

> Jubilation is in the air and on the streets. Some new objects are afoot coinciding with the Queen's Jubilee. A flag featuring a cameo of the Queen – sporting a sunny yellow ensemble – in the centre of the Union Jack is all over the neighbourhood and especially at shops and kiosks selling souvenirs. The way it is flown at shops and kiosks, and used as an elaborate stage set for the display of other things, makes it seem more like a shop-front adornment than a product for sale. It makes the shops feel celebratory. In addition to the flag, three kiosks selling handbags, luggage, and souvenirs along Tottenham Court Road have paper Elizabeth II masks to the retractable handles of rolling suitcases. It's pretty brilliant. The masks and suitcases seem to come alive. The angles of their placement – the little tilts of the head and position of the elastic – make them seem so cheeky. The suitcases too become regal – but comically dumpy – bodies for the heads above. I wonder if these interventions will increase sales, but then again, perhaps it's not really the point.
>
> – Field notes, 26 May 2012


1952
2012
The Queen's Diamond Jubilee
Commemorative Key Fob


SUPERSCOOP
CAUTION!
1952
2012
I LONDON
LONDON
Lyca
Lyca


LAMPAR
8
ROON
GERRARD
8
£12.99
LONDON
To Commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee
1952
2012
LONDON
ENGLAND
OXFORD
I LONDON

Making do & maintenance

Practices of making do, repair, and rejigging occur every day in ad hoc shops. Through these micro activities of material tinkering, the assemblage is produced. Light DIY is performed with hands and teeth, tape and scissors, screws, pens, cardboard, and hammers. In these processes, materials move around the shop – recycled for new uses. A bull-clip is positioned in a confectionary display to cradle a package of Polo mints. The same object holds together a stack of calling cards in another. Other material solutions are more studied: two wooden boards are nailed together, creating a low wedge, just high enough to ensure that two postcard racks keep from rolling down a slight incline of a forecourt.

Though often invisible, maintenance and repairs – and the innovation and improvements they inspire – buoy up cities through their inevitable processes of decay (Graham & Thrift 2007). The celebration of everyday maintenance has been highlighted elsewhere. In their attentive visual and ethnographic exploration of mending practices in England's South West, DeSilvey and colleagues (2014; Bond et al. 2013) show a sense of measured resourcefulness and care in the tasks of repair. Here bodies, tools, and skill assemble in careful practices of tinkering to extend the lives of things. Like the visibility of some repairs themselves, the materiality of spaces, bodies, and tools implicated in the process of repair show strains of time and use. In a more urban setting, London-based artist Richard Wentworth has created a rich body of sculptural and photographic work addressing how matter is configured by bodies and time. His on-going photographic series *Making Do and Getting By* in particular brings attention to commonplace objects held in temporary association with others – a disposable cup on a fence, a hanger holding open a window – highlighting the utility and potential of mundane materials.

The improvisation of the shopkeepers is similarly immediate – temporally and spatially. Unlike employees in some retail environments who execute pre-given designs, ad hoc shopkeepers take on roles as makers through their tasks. Many intuitively recognise the potential of materials at hand and improvise with them (see Ingold 2012). Shopkeepers' capacities and competences are distributed – the sum of bodies, tools, and materials (Shove et al. 2007). Practices of making bring shopkeepers and material together.

These embodied doings intersect with, and are enabled by, the material affordances of things. Affordances suggest what an object can be or do (Ingold 2010c). It imagines the alternative possibilities of the material – its fecundity for a given situation. The voids in a building brick and a cinderblock mean they become suitable anchors for a rack of postcards. Nylon rope is fed through the holes, around and back, knotted, twisted, and secured. The material qualities of the bricks and rope offer and constrain their possibilities (Gibson 1979) and impact how they are engaged (Maycroft 2004; see also Graham & Thrift 2007 on emancipatory potential of things).


19-21 OCTOBER
OU CAN'T THE TAST


LONDON
DANGER: Government H
CIGARETTES CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAG

These material affordances have a place; they are located in space and time (Dant 2008). As Holloway and Hones (2007: 563) write:

> these affordances are spatialized in that objects become known through practice to have a place or be placed. Simply stated, most of the time objects have their place. Part of the affordance of an object therefore is its appropriate spatialisation: we register an object as being in its place through the possibilities for action that object offers.

Though an urban forecourt might not seem like an appropriate home for bound cinder blocks and building bricks, their place makes sense when we look at solutions across the neighbourhood. Branded market bags, parcel packages, and letter bags filled with sand solve similar problems in different ways with material more readily available in the shop. The potential, of these things and others, relates not only to its thing-ness, but also to the matter from which it is composed. Cinder blocks are heavy. So is sand. Their material density is an essential part of this assemblage. Whereas design often imposes itself on materials deemed more or less passive in the generative process, for Ingold (2010c, drawing on Deleuze & Guattari 1987), this sort of matter is active in the development of things. Objects are not prefigured in the mind and forced on materials, but are produced through working with those materials or in other cases "through the unfolding of a field of forces that cuts across its developing interface with the environment" (Ingold 2000: 290). The ad hoc postcard anchor was grown in the shop environment, emerging from the materials of which it is composed. As De Landa (2002: 72) reminds us, human and non-human things do not act through their properties alone, but in relation to other things in the assemblage. Like many other things in the shop, the anchor is a product of a set of performative relations, human competence, and meanings (see also Shove et al. 2007: 143).

Ad hoc shopkeeping practice does not impose on material but responds to it. Things play a generative role in the transformation and reproduction of practice (Shove et al. 2007: 147). This material environment of the shop is always changing. Not only do objects move in and out, but the Monster energy drink sticker loses its stickiness, the bottom of the Tesco carrier bag tears through, the coronation chicken in the sandwich goes off. Materials transform, and may exert an affective force when they do (Bennett 2010). For Hallam and Ingold (2007: 3-4), makers

> have to work in a world that does not stand still until the job is completed, and with materials that have properties of their own and are not necessarily predisposed to fall into the shapes required of them, let alone to stay in them indefinitely.

Though fastened with intensity, as it rubs against the edges of the bricks and blocks, and as the days pass, the nylon twine around the bricks may wear through and need replacing. Keeping the ad hoc shop is a continual project of rejigging in relation to the materials and matter at hand. Though the materials change, the ad hoc aesthetics of the shop are more stable – a result of the material heterogeneity always in the process of becoming. Like the postcard rack anchors, the shop is a material hybrid; it is visibly made up.


Since 1984

As seen in the postcard anchors, processes of rejigging may reveal the thing power of minor materials. Without more permanent fixtures, tape, rubber bands, and metal clips literally hold some shops together. These lesser materials are entrusted with great tasks. They slip into place and hold things together when purpose-built objects are too costly and their purchase too time-consuming. A material like this is an "intervener, which, by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen" (Bennett 2010: 9, citing Deleuze).

S-hooks are not required when a splayed paper clip can do the job. A Tic Tac display rack is overlooked for the thin plastic boxes that the matches came in – a perfect fit. Time and money are saved on a door stop when a Tesco carrier bag can be tied to the metal frame to keep the door from slamming shut. A purpose-built sweet shelf is not needed when a metal rod can so easily prop up a cardboard box on the counter. These mixed sweets will soon be gone anyway. And when they are, the box will move elsewhere, making space for another sort of display. The rod will later prop up the shopkeeper's phone on the slanted counter so he can watch YouTube videos, before it is used for something else.

As actants in these assemblages, materials permit an instant solution to the problem at hand – problems that are always changing. Despite their familiarly, objects in the shops are always in motion. Things keep changing: a new style of umbrella just came out; Polo mints were on offer at the cash-and-carry; raspberries are in season. Ad hoc-ness requires flexibility in design and continual innovation. The mutability of the shops benefits from the flexible utility of small fastening objects. These objects engender a certain fixity. They remain at work in the shop, helping stock objects move swiftly through.

The shop has been open for five months. For five months, a small beige rubber band has been tightly wound around a rusty metal peg – six, maybe seven times. Tension, time, and weather are perceptible in the elastic's small fissures. These are cracks under pressure. There's stress in ensuring a shelf of cigarettes does not come sliding forward. The threat is tangible. The rusty metal peg – really only meant to hang a few bags of Haribo Tangtastics or Cadbury's Bitsa Wispas – acts as a stand-in for a proper shelf support. Like its twin on the other end, the peg projects from a groove in the laminated pressboard to bear the weight of the metal shelf and up to 100 packs of cigarettes. The precarity is amplified by an intentional bend in the length of the peg to make the array of cigarettes more visible and enticing. This battle with gravity is fought with duct and packing tape underneath, and the rubber band. It has persevered for five months, and maybe this wasn't its first job. Knowing the owners, I doubt this rubber band was plucked from a fresh pack. We can be sure it had a past life, bundling calling cards or rolls of coins perhaps.

– Field notes, 7 August 2012


① Talk Home

Duct tape, masking tape, packing tape, electrical tape… It is plainly holding the place together. As I sit behind the cash, I run my fingernail over the folded ridges of the tape covering the price sheet – smoothing it out and pressing out the bubbles. It's hard to lay it down flat, especially when it's so wide. Similarly broad bands of rippled tape hold the gum rack to the counter. Thinner bands of tape – the "Magic" type meant for gifts – hold the Lycamobile leaflet stand to the top of the gum rack. Duct tape and packing tape hold the shelves to the kiosk walls and to the counter in front. Each time I close the cash register too hard, Daleel winces. "One day the tape will give way and the machine will fall to the pavement."

– Field notes, 30 August 2012

On my walk down the Kingsway, I notice material strategies, securing things in the forecourts to deter thieves. Lengths of nylon rope are woven through the handles of the suitcases on the pavement, tying them together and to the shop's door. They feel like lines drawn to hold them together. Similarly, at the souvenir kiosk by Russell Square, strings are twisted and drawn from peg to peg to secure T-shirts hanging in place. At another kiosk, the nylon straps of black folding umbrellas are tangled where they hang from the rough metal pegs projecting from laminated pressboard. The loose knot looks a bit messy, but it will complicate a quick grab and run.

– Field notes, 25 July 2012

Waste not, want not. Due in part to financial constraints, materials in the shop are exhausted completely. The paper on the till had a red line yesterday and has gone white again. Instead of changing the roll at the warning, Daleel will let it run until there is no paper left. The reams of receipts collect by our feet.

– Field notes, 7 August 2012

The daily repairs and renovations are needed to ensure the shop and its products are fit for purpose. For some shops, renovations are slow. At any given address, shops transfigure, come, and go. They are passed down. In most cases, there is no budget here for total transformation. So material, and the practices it affords, is inherited, at least in part. The layers of ownership are evident. A deli case displays mobile phone accessories in what used to be a juice and sandwich kiosk. A fruit display is created on a makeshift table created from upended plastic crates. These are sites of making do, and much is done with what's around.

When he took over management of the kiosk, the shelving was here, the metal pegs were here, the rusted gum rack was here, the prayer book was here, the wooden stool with the worn blue cushion was here, the broken price gun was here, the paint brush used for dusting was here, the Lycamobile branding was here. Everything beside the fridge, cash register, and stock were already present. Even advertisements for products no longer in the shop remain. Looking closely at the things around, the kiosk's past life selling, fixing, and unlocking mobile phones is evident. Before this, it was a newsagent. Despite the lack of newspapers, it is still called SS News.

Daleel found the newspaper box full of old display shelves when he arrived, but it's not clear if they were used for the shop. The shelf supports have tongues that are supposed to fit in metal runners. The walls on the other hand are designed with lateral grooves made for pegs with angled ends. They don't fit together. As a result, the shelves on the interior walls are balanced on these pegs, which project slightly from the edge of the shelves… some with rubber tips, some without.

The unit under the cash register is not a purpose built confectionary unit, but cobbled together with mismatched tongue and groove style shelves, sheets of metal and duct tape. On these shelves chocolate bars and other sweets are displayed in the boxes they were purchased in. The top piece of metal on the unit was found in the bins behind the local Tesco, and the others were discovered in the newspaper box outside. Secured with a couple screws and some tape, the top of the counter slants slightly into the kiosk. My pen rolls to the floor if I place it on the counter next to the till. Maybe I'll fix it someday, Daleel tells me, but it's difficult with the pieces he's working with. "At least the money slides into the kiosk and not out."

– Field notes, 31 July 2012

Shopkeeping often feels like domestic work. Through the course of a day, shopkeepers collapse boxes, sort the recycling, take out the bin; they sweep, dust, and wipe. These tasks are part of the habitual rhythm of the shop. Materially and affectively, waste is part of the shop and their familiarity. The dirt and dust too belong to these places and to the experience of keeping shop in the city (see Amato 2000).

As well as their daily encounters with dust, shopkeepers respond to weather, working with and against the elements. These urban natures penetrate the shop, and particularly impact street traders who are exposed to variable conditions. Unlike indoor retail environments, for kiosks, weather becomes part of the commercial experience; the affective capacities of the elements may enliven the retail environment (see Cole & Crang 2011 on the Borough Market). For street traders, weather is an inescapable experience of light, sound, and feeling, and a medium through which all activities transpire (Ingold 2005: 105). Practices of keeping shop – inside and out – take place through the heat, cold, rain, sleet, wind, and sunshine.

It's unending: the thick, black dust that collects in the little folds of the sweet packages. It provides constant work in the kiosk. I use the paint brush from the storage box outside to sweep away the perpetual film. I wipe around the braille on the Lockets and struggle to get the brush into the tight foil creases of the Chewits packages. The dust and the action of brushing each package makes the products feel a little less shiny, sort of handled, used. Even after a good sweep, the slick packages feel just slightly gritty. Turnover is slow, and most of the items have seen the brush before. The grime is especially visible when displays are changed. When a couple of boxes of Starburst candies are consolidated, the whiteness of the empty box reveals its sooty corners. The black dust is mixed with the soft tuft produced by the plane trees to help the wind carry their seed. But there are few places to take root along the impenetrable surfaces of the shop.

– Field notes, 31 July 2012

While most accept our recent erratic weather with consternation, some local traders rely on people getting caught out. They deal in "weather goods" or so say their street trading licenses. Umbrellas, scarves, sunglasses, gloves, hats: all those things you forgot at home. Keepers of these ad hoc shops are tuned into the forecast. No one else benefits as much from the rain. "When it pours rain? Ah, Mia, this is my best day" (field notes, 18 July 2012). Displays act as barometers; the reorganisation of material anticipates shifts in the elements. A break in the clouds means a tri-panel rack of sunglasses emerges from the back of the kiosk. When clouds are about to return, so do bold umbrellas opened to alert passers-by. Other climactic responses are understated. The weight and the colour palette of the pashminas transmutes somewhat from summer to winter; from wispy pastel florals, to sober jewel-toned paisleys. Baseball caps too are gradually replaced by woolly hats and earmuffs. Both still show their colours in oscillation with the football matches.

Daleel is standing on the step ladder, his head in the crawl space. He's rooting around for the blue zipped case filled with cigarettes to replenish the Pall Mall reds. He gasps and emerges with value packs of chocolate bars and a pale expression. It's hot in the kiosk these days – quite hot. The rising heat has melted the chocolate. "I'll just put them lower", Daleel says, "This will cool them off". We open the packs and arrange the bars in boxes, the slippery chocolate gliding under the wrappers. We put them out front, behind similar, cooler, bars if possible. As my hands move over the confectionary, the Milky Way bars, "with white centres", feel particularly soft. They weren't even up above. Although Daleel won't open one for fear of wasting stock, through the rest of the day, when anyone puts a soft bar on the counter, he darts to the front of the kiosk to help them find another.

– Field notes, 25 July 2012

It's cold in the kiosk today. There is a portable heater in the crawl space, but it would be too expensive to run continuously. Instead, we huddle by the vent on the back of the drinks fridge. The harder the fridge works to keep the Vitamin Water cold, the warmer we become. But today – certainly because of the temperature – people aren't buying cold drinks. And because the fridge isn't being opened, it doesn't have to power up. And if the fridge doesn't power up, then the hot air doesn't blast out the back. It's cold in the kiosk today, and it's only September.

– Field notes, 5 September 2012

Rhythms of the shop

All the work stocking, storing, displaying, organising, repairing, is done in anticipation of sales: the ringing in and making change.

At the kiosk, I sit at the till. The only proper chair is there, and I'm the "chief guest." This means I ring in the purchases. I still stutter slightly when selecting the correct "department" button before entering the price on the register – department one for drinks, two for confectionary, three for other goods, four for tobacco products, I remind myself. It takes time to rethink making change with British currency. My thinking through change in Canadian currency – with quarters – is a throwback perhaps to my work at a petrol station as a teenager. That was the last time I "worked the cash." I remember the rhythms of shopkeeper in my body… ringing in, making change. I also recall the sensation of working with cash all day. It makes my hands feel dirty… like they're unfamiliar to me. Still, I take care to smooth out the crumpled notes. I put the change in customers' hands before handing them their notes with two hands, so they can grab it easily and the coins don't slide away. This differs from the common practice of offering the bill first and placing the coins on top, done so the customer can see their change. I understand the logic there, but don't like change slipping out. Either way is fine, I'm told. It's a matter of preference. I had a dream about choosing the right department on the till the other day. In the kiosk, Daleel often describes times and dates as prices. 10:05 a.m. becomes 10 and 5p. Shopkeeping practice gets inside you.

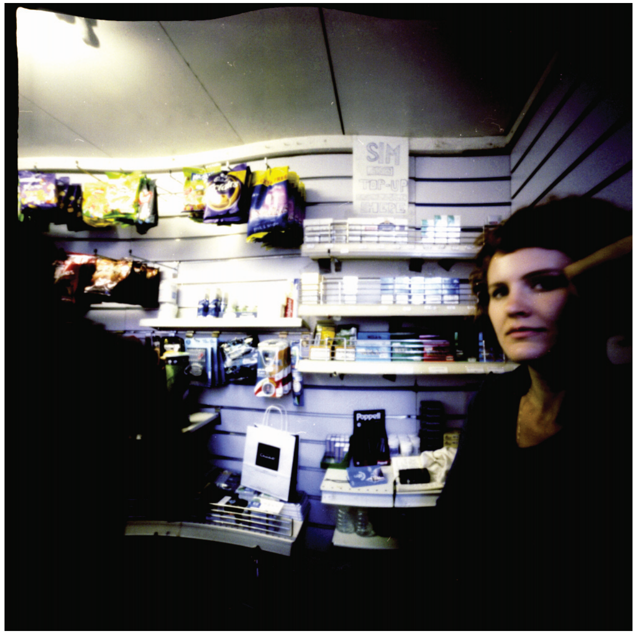
– Field notes 29 August 2012

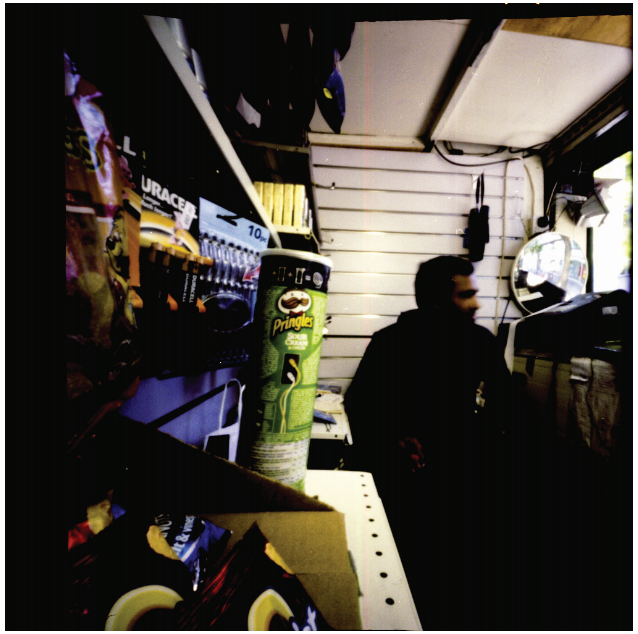
As the consumers come and things are sold, shopkeepers calculate the takings and gauge the stock. Should we run to the bank to get change before they close for the weekend? Will it rain this week? Should the extra umbrellas come out of storage? Have we made enough this week to stock up? Should we stock up on Vitamin Water while it's on offer? Does the stall look empty? Though the modus operandi of the shop is to sell, it creates the problem of needing more stock. Where will it come from? What will we buy? How will we pay for it?

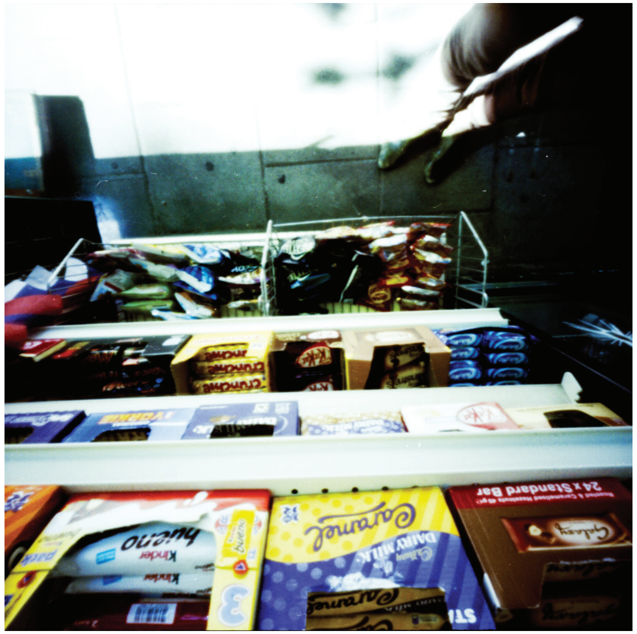
Setting targets – to sell a certain number of a product or hit a total sales mark for the day – helps bring in the pounds and pass the time. It creates a sort of game, welcome in environments where so much time is spent waiting. Waiting is central to the lives of these places. While waiting is often considered an absence of something – and in the kiosk where I worked it was certainly concerning for its lack of sales – it also opened up a new space for different sorts of actions (on stillness see Bissell & Fuller 2010; Cresswell 2012a). Time is whiled away playing cards, snacking, people watching, reading, watching YouTube videos, chatting, taking photos, and wishing for sales. It is also a time of contemplation — the time when displays are reconfigured, inventory is considered, and practice is evaluated. This "stillness punctuates the flow of all things" in the shop (Bissell & Fuller 2010: 3).

No one has come for at least 45 minutes. There are two bags of pistachios left. They expired yesterday. Daleel grabs a bag and opens them up. He pours a pile in my hands and I drop them on my lap in the cradle of my skirt. While shelling the nuts and throwing them into Daleel's empty Jaffa Cake box, we chat about Eid and his plans with his wife and son. After a short while, my lips are shrivelled from all the salt and the tip of my thumb feels sore where I pull at the edge of the shells, but Daleel keeps pouring them into my hands and I keep cracking them open, flipping the nuts into my mouth, and tossing the shells in the box. I wonder how much Ramadan had shaped my experience of being in the kiosk with Daleel. It ended yesterday. Over the last month we talked about food so much, but actually never ate anything together. I remember Daleel telling me about eating peanuts in the fields with his friends in Bangladesh. There's something familiar about this ritual for both of us.

— Field notes, 21 August 2012







Conclusions: Retail is detail

This chapter has detailed what is done in some ad hoc shops and how things play a part in those doings. It pays particular attention to the co-constitutive relationships and dialogue between material and practice. The chapter stays close to the shop, working through themes of spontaneity and the liveliness of matter, and creative practice and domestication. Through a description of everyday happenings, I show how the micro-geographies of the shop are used, how the meanings of materials change, and how these commercial shops are made personal through the ad hoc creative practices of shopkeepers. By contrasting ad hoc shopkeeping practice to retail science, I argue that shopkeepers' intuitive and embodied methods often "get it right." Following from this, I argue that practices of in-shop maintenance implicate not only these intuitive and embodied practices, but also the thing power of objects.

The way I describe shopkeeping practice chimes with the adhocism championed by Jencks and Silver (2013). Ad hoc curators are at work continually adapting existing systems to solve problems with materials at hand. This work is not haphazard but purposeful. The curation of objects here is loose, but responsive and measured. Shopkeepers do the best with the resources at hand in the time available. Though I draw from Jencks and Silver, my take on the ad hoc brings the materials into more focus, shining a brighter light on their potential.

As shown, materials are embroiled in practices of ad hoc creativity. If shopkeepers are storytellers (Crewe 2003), their stories can be heard in the materials of the shop, which tell of time and inventive work. Here, I want to argue that ad hoc shops are spaces of distributed vernacular creativity (Edensor et al. 2010), where creativity works in dialogue between the agency of the shop's material and the shopkeepers' embodied knowledge of that material . Creativity is relational, emerging from social and material contexts. For Hallam and Ingold (2007: 9), an individual's "creativity is inseparable from that of the total matrix of relations in which it is embedded and into which it extends." Because shopkeeping is a material practice, the shopkeepers create in a togetherness with objects (Ingold 2000). In this way, practices of shopkeeping are resourceful labours of assembly and modes of dwelling; they are created through the lived experience of the body and engage with the matter with immediacy (Ingold 1993, 2000; Thrift 2001, 2004, 2007). These moral economies (Silverstone et al. 1992) are connected with material economies through personal creativity; boundaries between objects and bodies blur (Molotch & McClain 2008). Ad hoc creativity puts the thing power of materials at hand to work. These practices exhaust the resources and the space available; things are transformed through creative recycling. As shown, an object's presence in these shops is often at odds with its intended longevity. The resulting material complexity and richness of the shops raises the issues of time. Material exhaustion and layering is about economising, but also about an unhurried spirit of place. As such, as well as challenging top-down retail systems, ad hoc shops challenge the practices of quick turnover and fast retail familiar to other sorts of shops.

The old retail maxim "retail is detail" is true here, though perhaps with a different inflection than its use by retail scientists. These places are formed and maintained at a very micro level. Because the minutiae of these shops make them what they are, they are worth taking seriously. Indeed this is what I argue for in my work here, through both my visual and textual descriptions. Shopkeeping is approached earnestly by shopkeepers, who tune in to the shops' detail through economies of attention – both rationally and unconsciously. Like the evocative work of DeSilvey and her colleagues (2014; Bond et al. 2013) on material cultures of repair, the creative reworking with material objects in ad hoc shops demonstrates particular values and ethics. These shops, I argue, are kept with attentiveness and sincerity. The personal creative investment in them is felt in their affective atmosphere and material.

This dialogic relationship between things and shopkeepers, and the practices of personalisation through economies of attention, are further drawn out in Chapter Six as they relate to the forces of the brand.

6

Ad hoc-ness & the brand

The complex texture of ad hoc shops is thick with branded layers. Here, global trademarks are entangled with local shopkeeping practice: economically, they are bound up in mutually beneficial relationships; materially, they are made for each other. In the shops, the sameness of the brand meets a world of difference. While the brands are busy shaping the shops through material, goodwill, and retail science, the shop is hard at work absorbing and reworking it, producing new textures and local meanings. This complex yet intimate relationship is further complicated by the investments of the neighbourhood brand and its aesthetic politics of order and disorder. Like a pack of Cadbury Wispas on a hot day, conventional binaries between "global brand" and "local shop" soften in these places, if not only by the brand's ad hoc mode of intervention and the shopkeepers' desire for corporate attachment. The ad hoc brandscape is a welcoming, yet complex tangle of forces.

Brands, urban space & ad hoc shops

Brands are identities crafted to differentiate one mass-produced product or service from another. They are intrinsic to contemporary consumption practices and the "core meaning of the modern corporation" (Klein 2000: 5). Brands embody emotions, feelings, and values (Moor 2007). As such, they are a meaningful part of identities and everyday lives. As an essential part of the cultural economy, brands and branding are a focus of study across disciplines. In this chapter, I draw from literature in consumption studies, material culture studies, anthropology, sociology, and geography to explore how brands work with and through ad hoc shops. Branded objects are an essential part in these retail environments, both materially and economically. Corner shops trade in branded food and drink; kiosks hawk football jerseys and scarves; souvenir shops sell official Olympic merchandise. Beyond the commodities sold, brands inhabit the surfaces of these shops in other ways – ways which have an impact on the neighbourhood. In this chapter, I explore the mutual dependency between the brand and the shop, how each works on the other, and indeed how they labour together, producing a particular texture of place in their wake. In this first of three sections, I begin by discussing the brands as part of the everyday life and material of the shop. I address the immateriality of brands to highlight both the affective register with which they communicate, and how the shops contribute to their production. As I will detail, this production is also the work of brand representatives who shape a brand's presence in the shop through material interventions and retail science. Partnerships between the shop and brand bring economic benefits to the shopkeepers and changes to the brandscapes of the neighbourhood.

7up, Aero, Ahmad Tea London, Airwaves, Ambrosia, Anadin, Appletiser, Ariel, Arsenal, Bahlsen, Bassetts, Baxter's, Beck's, Ben & Jerry's, Benson & Hedges, Bertolli, Best-in, Betty Crocker, Bic, Bodrum, Boost, Bounty, Bovril, Breeze, Budweiser, Bueno, Bulmers, Butterkist, Cadbury, Calgon, Camel, Capri-Sun, Carling, Carlsberg, Carte D'Or, Chelsea FC, Cirio, Coca-Cola, Colgate, Colman's, Cornetto, Crespo, Crunchie, Cussons, Carex, Cutter's Choice, Dairy Milk, Daz, Diet Coke, Dole, Doritos, Double Decker, Double-mint, Dove, Dr Pepper, Dunlop, Duracell, Dylon, Eat Natural, E-Lites, Euro Talk, Evian, Extra, Fairy, Fanta, Fentiman's, Finish, Fisherman's Friend, Flora, Foster's, Fruitella, Fuller's, Galaxy, Galpharm, Gaviscon, Gillette, Gray Line, Green Giant, Grolsch, Guardian, Guinness, Häagen Dazs, Hall's, Haribo, Heineken, Heinz, Hellema, Hellmann's, Highland Springs, HSBC, Hubba Bubba, Huggies, Hula-hoops, Imodium, Imperial Leather, Infocash, IRN-BRU, Jack Daniels, John West, Johnson's, Juicy Fruit, Just Juice, KA, Kettle Chips, Kinder, Kit Kat, Kiwi, Kleenex, Kodak, KP, Lavazza, Lay's, Lebara mobile, Listerine, Lockets, London 2012, Loot, Lucozade, Lycamobile, M&Ms, Magners, Magnum, Maltesers, Manchester United, Maoam, Marlboro, Marmite, Mars, Mastercard, Mayfair, Mazola, McCoy's, McNeil Products Ltd., McVitie's Jaffa Cakes, Mega Super Sour Zoom, Melis, Mentos, Milkybar, MilkyWay, Minstrels, Mirinda, MoneyGram, Monster, Mountain Dew, Munchies, National Lottery, Nescafé, Newcastle, Newman's Own, Nurofen, O2, Oasis, Office Essentials, Old Jamaica, Oral-B, Orange, Orangina, Orbits, Oreo, Oxo, Oxy Fresh, Oyster, P&G, Pall Mall, Panasonic, Pepsi, Perrier, Persil, PG tips, Pimm's, Polo Mints, Poppell, Primesight, Princess, Pringles, R Whites, Radox, Ready brek, Red Bull, Revels, Revive, Rizla, Rolo, Rowntree, Royal Mail, Rubicon, Sarson's, Saxa, Schweppes, Skittles, Smash, Smint, Smirnoff, Snickers, Sobe, Sprite, Starburst, Stella Artois, Strongbow, Sun Exotic, Sunkist, Super Malt, Sure, Surf, Talk Home, Tang, Tango, Tate Lyle, Tesco, Tetley, Thatchers, The Olympic Games, Thomas, Tic Tac, Tivoli, Tizer, Toblerone, Topic, Trebor, Trident, Twinings, Twirl, Twister, Twix, Tyskie, Union, V8, Vidal, Visa, Vivet, Vodafone, Volvic, Walkers, Wall's, Watson's, WD-40, Werther's, West Ham Utd, Western Union, Wilkinson, Wispa, Wrigley's, XXX, Yazoo, Yorkie, Zappers

Whereas the neighbourhood brand was discussed in Chapter Four, the brands of concern here are largely global corporate ones. Many are iconic (Holt 2006a): Coca-Cola, the Olympic Games , Cadbury, Wrigley's, etc. Some are familiar not only to these shops and this neighbourhood, but to shops and neighbourhoods everywhere. Brands are inseparable from everyday life and space in global cities. They are a naturalised part of everyday experience (Arvidsson 2006; Klein 2000; Lash & Lury 2007; Lury 2004; Moor 2007) and inherently spatial (Pike 2009). Klingmann (2007) uses "brandscapes" to describe how product branding practices have been extended to place-making in conjunction with the ascent of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1998) and the commodification of everyday space (see also Lury 2004; Moor 2007). Experience in branded spaces and with branded products creates the "ambiences [...] within which life naturally occurs" (Arvidsson 2006: 13; Lash & Lury 2007).

Retail spaces have been featured in literature on place-branding, where consumers live the brand in spectacular immersive themed environments (Arvidsson 2006; Bryman 2004; Goss 1993, 1999; Gottdiener 2001; Hannigan 1998; Hopkins 1990; Klein 2000; Lukas 2007; Zukin 1991, 1998). The neighbourhood branding initiatives, discussed in Chapter Four, also try to work in this way – creating unified visions for space through visual and material narratives (see Ashworth 2009). Analogous to their flattening of use-value, brands endeavour to flatten out the physical world, creating smooth responsive surfaces (Lash & Lury 2007). Though smooth, branded retail spaces are open to co-option, spontaneity, and the humanness of those that occupy them (see Klein 2000; J.C. Miller 2014b).

Evidently, the way the brand works through the ad hoc shops is quite different from the branded retail space or the urban district. As explored below, the particular textures and practices of the ad hoc shop host a distinct encounter between the brand and humanity. Nevertheless, the branding of the shop contributes to the brandscapes of the neighbourhood. For Cronin (2008a: 2747), public advertising is part of an urban vernacular; it is a co-creation of corporate producers and the public that "shapes the affective geographies of urban space". Iconic global brands have long been part of the urban economies and heterogeneous texture of urban places, making and remaking the city in banal and familiar ways (Cronin 2006). Though the materials and brands represented shift through time, historical photos from my area illustrate that comprehensive branding on ad hoc shop fronts is not new.

As a naturalised part of the ad hoc shop, brands are an everyday part of the neighbourhood. Brands are so deeply woven into the fabric of the shop that they become signs for the shops themselves. Certain brands embody the ad hoc shops and announce their presence in urban space. Akin to the use of trademarked names in everyday language – "pass the Kleenex;" "meet me at the Oxo tower" – the visual presence of the brands becomes a commonplace marker for everyday experiences in the city. Outside a corner shop, for example, the red Wall's sign on the pavement signals not only the frozen treats inside, but also the ad hoc shop in the urban landscape. It is legible as a familiar icon from blocks away, behaving like the barber pole of the corner shop. The exterior assemblage of the corner shop as a whole acts in much the same way: the injection-moulded National Lottery stand, the Oyster top-up posters, the Lycamobile stickers in the windows... As captured in the dreaminess of the pinhole camera, the visual cacophony of branded objects – their shapes and colours – melts into the familiarity of the shops; they become part of the symbolic and iconic landscape of both the shops and of the neighbourhood. They are as intrinsic to the identity of ad hoc shops as non-branded fixtures: the plastic grass, flashing open sign, the plastic bowls for fruit, and newspaper boxes. The branded objects follow us inside:

I approach the shop. On the door, I confront a chorus of signs telling me to "Open": a sticker from Oyster, another from Wrigley's 5, and a Wall's poster stuck to the glass door with small clear suction cups. A black and yellow Western Union sticker and a sign showing the opening hours (and available flavours of Vitamin Water) tell me to "Push" in unison. "Indulge here" suggests a Haagen Dazs transfer. "E-lites on sale here". "Buy your first class stamps here." I enter the shop. Inside, the orange glow from the backlit Lucozade sign is captured in the glass on top of the Wall's freezer. Cadbury Olympic Games bunting is strung overhead between the Walker's crisp unit and the top corner of the second fridge: the one with handles shaped like old fashioned Coke bottles. My eyes coast along the small stickers affixed at the edge of the chocolate bar shelves: Kit Kat, Smarties, Toffee Crisp, Yorkie, Nestle Lion, Rolo, Bounty… They bounce over the Wrigley's gum display unit and pan over the Cadbury candy bar shelf on the counter. Even without the products, the surfaces of the shops speak about the brands they embrace.

— Field notes, 27 July 2012


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream
Cornetto
Twister
Magnum
Solero
Calippo


TELEPHONE
NO SMOKING


POST OFFICE
Last Collection Time
Monday to Friday
6.30pm
Saturday
12 noon


ewspapers
lycamobile
www.lycamobile.co.uk
NEWS & MAG
WALL'S
Love Ice Cream
mobile
www.lycamobile.co.uk

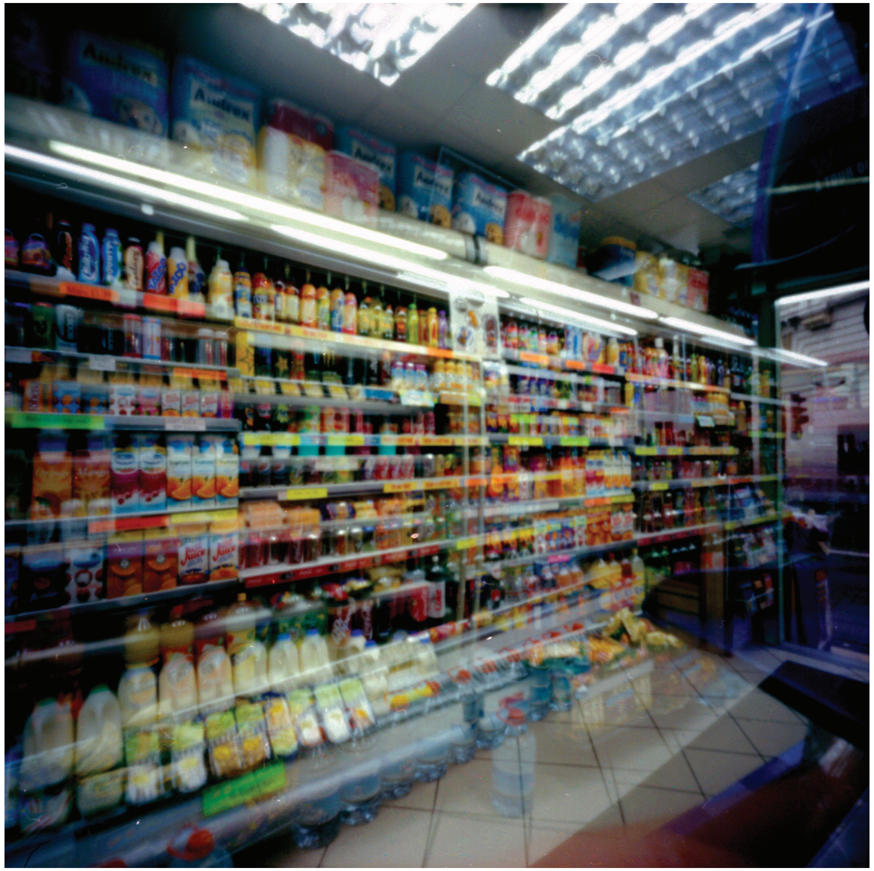

SUPERMA
oyster Ticket Stop
Russell's
Food & Wine
oyster Ticket Stop
Russell's
News & Mag


PRIVATE EYE
HELLO!
OK!
Love it!
Reveal
Wallpaper
Herald Tribune


SHOPPERS NEWS
NEWSAGENTS


Lycamob
WALL'S


Specsavers
Bus lane
Mon - Sat
11 am - 10 pm
BARCLAYS
HOT DOG
WALL'S


Andrex


WIRED
TUMBLR
cash MACHINE
play here!
Buy your Travelcards & Bus Passes here

The brand produces "stuff" – the physical commodities of the shop – and immaterial capital as well (Arvidsson 2006). Brands are seen as "processes and projections" (Lury 2004: 130, citing Knorr Cetina) which become the essence of a series of products. Lury (2004) has reconceptualised the brand as an animate brand-object, which finds some parallels in the way more material objects are discussed by Bennett (2010). The object-ness of the brand largely relates to its ability to direct action, be purposeful, and organise relations and other objects through performance. Lury (2004: 2) discusses the brand as an "object of possibility" that constitutes the social relations between products or services. Like Arvidsson (2006) she sees the brand as a social object, one that exists "between what humans inscribe in it and what it prescribes to humans" (Lury 2004: 148, referencing Latour). Brands have been discussed as partial, relying on the unpaid labour of consumers to complete them (Arvidsson 2006). Drawing from Marx's notion of general intellect, Arvidsson uses "ethical surplus" to describe the immaterial labour – the shared meaning, social relations, and communication – that surrounds and completes a brand (Arvidsson 2006). Corporate entities attempt to manage and internalise this ethical surplus.

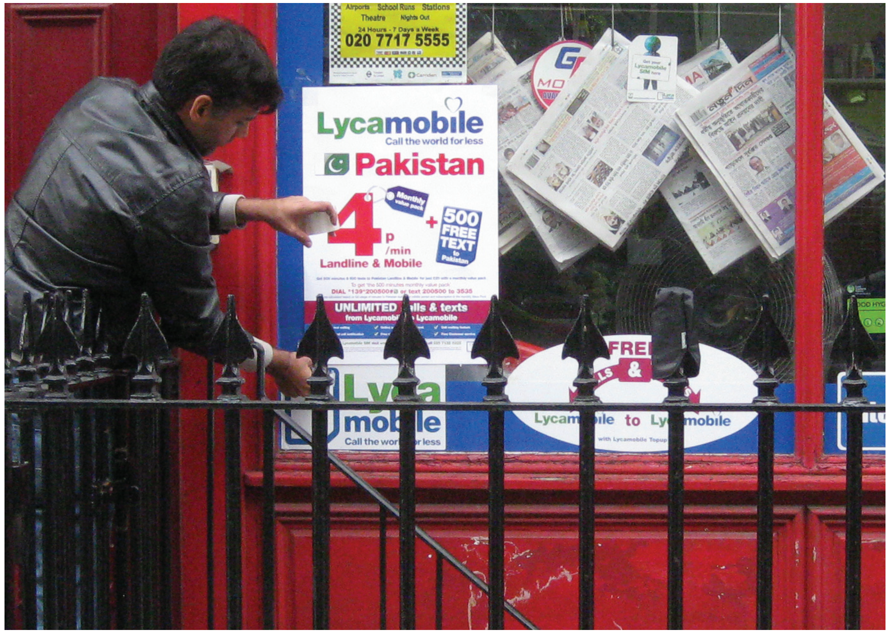
Imbued with use-value alone, the "commodity is dead" (Lash & Lury 2007: 6). Conversely, as an object, the brand is a dynamic living entity. The brand-object has history, relations, memory, and sign-value, making it alive, iconic, and potentially immortal (Lash & Lury 2007: 7). This feels a long way from the humanity of the ad hoc shop. However, understanding the brand as dynamic helps appreciate how each brand in the shop behaves differently (see Holt 2006a). It also helps appreciate the shopkeepers' role in branding practices and the everyday work done by brand managers to craft the brand. Important here is the way that brands are described as co-productions between producers and consumers (Arvidsson 2006; Klein 2000; Lash & Lury 2007; Lury 2004). As I show later in this chapter, in the case of the ad hoc shop, the shopkeeper becomes a co-producer of the brand-object, while reworking it in a local context.

Clearly, the virtual brand-object may materialise in physical space – it can "thing-ify" (Lash & Lury 2007: 7): all that is "Cadbury" becomes the slighted melted Dairy Milk bar in my hand, then in my mouth. For Lash and Lury, the reverse also happens. The production of the immaterial and material are related – we see "media-becoming-thing" and "thing-becoming-media". As explored below, this relationship between the material and immaterial is of importance to the shops' brand work, guided both by the shopkeeper and brand managers.

Managing the brand

Brands work through the material landscape of the shop. Outside, they may scale every surface, covering windows, canopies, newspaper boxes, and sign boards to announce the presence of their products inside. Within the shop too, corporations endeavour to manage the display of their branded products, through the design of shelving, racks, labels, boxes, bunting, and pop-out displays. While some of this branded material is left to accumulate, layering over time, other material is actively managed by branding representatives. In my neighbourhood, I interacted with representatives from a number of corporations, but developed particular relationships with the representatives from Coca-Cola and Lycamobile. Lycamobile is no doubt the less familiar of the two. It produces mobile SIM cards and top-up vouchers for cheap international call rates. The interventions of this company crop up frequently throughout the chapter. While at times it rather overwhelms the other cases, this reflects its aggressive launch in the neighbourhood around the time of my field work. As a result it was a burning topic for shopkeepers and neighbourhood officials.


Lycamobile
Nigeria
Monthly value pack
4p /min
Landline & Mobile
FREE TEXT to Pakistan
UNLIMITED calls & texts
FREE CREDIT


020 7717 5555
Lycamobile
Call the world for less
Pakistan
4p /min
Landline & Mobile
500 FREE TEXT to Pakistan
UNLIMITED calls & texts from Lycamobile to Lycamobile


Lycamobile
Call the world for less
www.lycamobile
Pakistan
4p /min
Landline & Mobile
500 FREE TEXT to Pakistan


Lycamobile
Pakistan
UNLIMITED calls & texts from Lycamobile to Lycamobile

With his eyes slightly squinted, Areeb swiftly scans the shop window. A thick roll of posters advertising the newest call rates to Pakistan and Nigeria projects from an opening in his rolling case emblazoned with Lycamobile logos. He is ever on the lookout for prime postering space. Sometimes he covers his own posters as the deals change. Sometimes he covers those of a competitor – lighter blue edges of Lebara bills peek from under his own. Sometimes he covers posters for an unrelated product. "The Coke rep should know it's my shop." A contest is on for the best spots and shopkeepers often concede to the changes, no matter how quickly they come – there are other more critical concerns. Areeb uses his teeth to tear off lengths of wide packing tape: four short pieces for the corners and then longer reams for each edge. He smoothens out the tape with the heel of his hand, steps back, and takes a photo for his boss. Today, 35 photos with the same message: "4p/minute +500 free text." Someone wanders past, and asks him about the deal in Urdu. "A great price," Areeb tells him, "I use it too to call my family." Areeb follows him inside. A haul of branded materials rolls behind: Lycamobile carrier bags, Lycamobile sticky notes, Lycamobile pens, Lycamobile countertop mats, Lycamobile Ramadan schedules, Lycamobile brochures, Lycamobile brochure holders, Lycamobile Oyster card holders, Lycamobile stickers, and Lycamobile SIM cards. It depends on the relationship, and on the agreement, but most shopkeepers will gain some swag when Areeb visits them every few days. "If you show well, you sell well," he tells me. He is proud of the displays and the Lycamobile paraphernalia. In the SIM world, they are innovators in this sort of swag, I'm told – the first to produce the SIM-branded Oyster card holder, for example (though Oyster was admittedly the first to rim the windows with branded vinyl stickers). Relationships with the shopkeepers are fundamental, he tells me. They are developed over time and in careful collaboration with the whole team: his colleague who sells the SIM vouchers and the other who affixes more permanent branding to the windows. He used to do that job. It's more creative work, whereas this is more social. He gets along with the shopkeepers. They chat. They joke. They're working together

— Field notes, 17 October 2012

Mia: "I always thought that the Wall's sign was like the barber pole of the corner shop."

Areeb: "It's true, Mia. And if so, my posters are like photos in the window of the latest hairstyles. They tell people what is available inside."

— Field notes, 17 October 2012


All you need to know about electric cars in 7 minutes
Lycamobile Call the world for less
SALAM NEWS KIOSK
NEWSPAPERS · MAGAZINES · COLD DRINKS · CONFECTIONERY
Lyca mobile Call the world for less
Pay As You Go Sim
Available Here
• COLD DRINKS
• PHONE CARDS
• NEWSPAPER
• CRISP
• TOBACCO
• SWEETS
• MAP
Lycamobile
ALL IN ONE VALUE PACK
UNLIMITED
International Calls + Texts
Lyca mobile Available Here
Lebara
Thank you
Lycamobile Call the world for less
250
UNLIMITED Texts & Data
£10
China
Kenya
Sri Lanka
Bangladesh
Nigeria
Philippines
Poland
Turkey
Jamaica
Romania
Brazil
Ghana


Lycamobile
Call the world for less
S S NEWS
TOP UP CONFECTIONERY
TOBACCO SOFT DRINKS
No loading
at any time
Bus lane
cameras
Lycamobile
GT MOBILE
£10 Free Credit
www.lycamobile.co.uk


Lycamobile
Call the world for less
GATES HILL NEWSAGENT
SOFT DRINKS, SWEETS
MAGAZINE, ICE CREAM
FRESH SNACKS
GREETINGS CARDS
FRESH FRUIT
The UK's favourite SIM for low cost International & National calls
No loading
at any time
www.lycamobile.co.uk

It wasn't always a Lyca-branded shop. Like many corner shops, it once had newspaper signage, and it was branded by the humour magazine, Viz. But now, Lyca claims each surface: the newspaper box, canopies, sign boards, and windows, which are completely sealed with Lycamobile stickers on the outside: some of it logos, some just wide bands of Lyca blue. The only natural light comes through the open door. It makes the shop seem like a cosy den, and a small space feel even tighter. A woman sits on a stack of crates and chats with the shopkeeper over the counter. He tells us that after Viz folded, Coke contacted him, but he wanted something different. "Lyca is up and coming." With the contract, his loyalty is bought and he's now restricted from advertising other brands on his exterior. But he's happy with the SIM company agreement. They've agreed on a two year contract through which Lyca will keep the canopy clean. It's a long time to live without the direct light of day

— Field notes, 12 July 2012

The relationships neighbourhood brand representatives cultivate with shopkeepers are important for the effective deployment of the brand. Some corporate producers need these everyday shops. Though unassuming, these places drive sales and are important contact points between the brand and the consumer. John Noble, Director of British Brands Group, tells me that for brands in the "convenience categories [these shops] will be hugely important." He continues, explaining that:

> brand owners' distribution strategies are influenced still by the old Coca-Cola mantra that their products should always be within an arm's length of desire. If people want to buy / expect a product to be available in a particular location, it is the brand owner's job to do everything it can to make it available for them. Smaller neighbourhood shops may not have the sophisticated retail management systems of their larger competitors so branded suppliers may see a potential role for them to help smaller store managers with shelf layout and stocking policies in order to serve consumers best and thereby maximise sales." (personal email communication, 15 December 2014)

Ad hoc shops are important to brands both as key sites of product consumption and because the surface area of shops offers prime space for potential brand promotion. Brands, like Lycamobile, compete for space along ad hoc shops' surfaces for their products and their advertisements. Neighbourhood representatives aim to build relationships with all shops in their neighbourhood, but also look for strategic partnerships with particular shops. These shops are the focus for more intensive material interventions. Shops are chosen to be reconfigured as billboards for the brand (see Crilley 1993). While the surface of the shops is not conducive to the creation of an idealised branded environment – smooth, seamless, without surprises or friction (Arvidsson 2006) – partnerships see radical material interventions.

In the neighbourhood, these are largely the work of Lycamobile, Coca-Cola, Oyster, Cadbury, and Lebara Mobile. These brands hire the surfaces of ad hoc shops via different arrangements to display their logos, brand colours, and promotional materials. In cases of extensive exterior branding – and most often in the case of mobile SIM branding – a shop may receive monthly cash payments. I learned of contracts up to £600/month. More often, product is given in lieu of cash: boxes of chocolate may be awarded for Cadbury stickers in the window, for example, or free top-up vouchers are awarded by SIM companies to shops with a smaller degree of branding (a newspaper box perhaps). In other cases, infrastructural upkeep is promised: Coca-Cola provides a new canopy and promises to wash it every two months, for example.

As agreements are made, the identities of individual shops become intertwined with particular brands. The material of the city shows competition between brands and these shifts in shop loyalties. As a result, the brandscape of the neighbourhood shifts as contracts with shopkeepers change, new products come to market, and coveted brand partnerships emerge. A radical transformation occurred during my field work period in the run-up to the London 2012 Olympic Games, when official sponsors Cadbury and Coca-Cola tinted the neighbourhood purple and red. So comprehensive were the branding efforts that shops were confused with flagship shops for these brands.

The size of Hannell's Food & Wine, and its presence on the corner, makes the scale of the Cadbury branding feel even more significant. "People think it is a Cadbury shop!" Nishan tells me over the counter with an air of disbelief. "Like the M&M shop in Leicester Square." As a result of the confusion, customers end up spending more on chocolate. With the boards and stickers and branded material inside, it does feel like a Cadbury pop-up shop. When the partnership began, Cadbury reps talked through three design possibilities for the brand strategy. They settled on something bold, but it works for the vendors. They now sell heaps of chocolate – chocolate they were given for free by the company in exchange for their surface area. The campaign is meant to last through the Olympic period, but the branding will likely stay up long after the Games conclude. Indeed, removing the branded material would mean losing all the shop's signage. It has all been replaced. Without the budget to redo all the signage, the only way to distance themselves from Cadbury now would be to partner with another brand. From under a length of Cadbury bunting that combines their signature purple with the red blue and white, Nishan tells me it's not all about the free chocolate. It's festive. "We can support the Olympic spirit." In signing contracts with the LOCOG, Cadbury and other sponsors were guaranteed exclusive use of the Olympic brand. While it would be unlawful for Nishan to fashion a sign with five rings and stick it in his window, Cadbury branding gives the shop a chance to celebrate London 2012.

— Field notes, 18 June 2012


OPEN 24 HOURS
OPEN
24 HOURS
£10 FREE
Lebara


NEW
PURE RUSH
ENERGY never tasted so good
Londis
Maltesers
PAY ALL THESE BILLS HERE
Lucky Charms
Special Offer £1.89


OPEN 24 HOURS
Cadbury
HANNELLS FOOD & WINE
OPEN
Please use door on other side of building
Snacks
Sandwiches
Chocolate
Cold Drinks
Sweets
Ice Cream
and more
Drinks
Beer. Wine. Soft Drinks
OPEN
24 HOURS


Frozen Foods
LONDON


NEW OXFORD STREET
WC1
OPEN 24 HOU
HANNELLS FOOD & WINE
Cadbury
Hannells Food & Wine
Cadbury
Welcome to
Hannells Food & Wine
OPEN
Drinks
Snacks
Cash Machine Here

Three Coke reps come by in their red team jackets emblazoned with Coke and Olympic logos. They look jazzed up, like athletes striding towards the Olympic Park. Daleel asks them about offers on cans of Coke. Katy goes through the lists of cash-and-carry deals in her official binder. "You'll have to go to one of these places," she says, "there are no special offers for direct delivery now." When the deals do come, we buy so much that we can scarcely move around the kiosk. We turn sideways to shuffle past the flats of beverages bound tightly in soft plastic shrink wrap. Buy four get one free: that was the last one. Cold drinks and chocolate bars is where the money is: 100% mark-up, so long as the product can be bought at a discount. Coca-Cola pays £64 million to sponsor the Olympics. Daleel is looking desperately to save a couple pence on each can. But we're all just trying to sell a Coke, and "Get behind the Games."

— Field notes, 6 August 2014

An official stuffed white Team GB lion looks wistfully out of the shop's window, his head slightly tilted to one side, away from his company. His large folded tag and bar code obscure the furry feet of the large brown stuffed bear next to him. "London" is penned in a flowing cursive on his heart-shaped pillow. Here, an official and an unofficial souvenir cosy up. Both are produced in similar places. Both are manufactured using similar materials. While not trademarked, the brown bear perhaps represents another, looser sort of brand, one that is cultivated through the everyday practices of the shop: the brand of London. Besides representing different beasts and different brands, a chief difference is the price tag. I heard it a lot: "Buying and selling Olympic souvenirs, that's a risk. Sure, I make more with each sale, but I don't want to be stuck with hundreds of stuffed Wenlocks and Mandevilles, do I? Even an Olympic t-shirt is about £15 and I would have to double that for my customer."

— Field notes, 20 June 2014


A. P. FOOD Express
OPEN
OFF LICENCE
Coca-Cola
CELEBRATE TH
LONDON
2012 OLYMPICS
HERE WITH Coca-Cola


Coca-Cola
CELEBRATING
LONDON 2012
TWISTER
MUGS
FOR EXCELLENT PEOPLE
IRN-BRU
BARR
ORIGINAL AND BEST
Tetley
TRY ME FREE
TWININGS
Earl GREY
English BREAKFAST
sing
our
ns?
tery


the guard
Coca-Cola
WORLDWIDE PARTNER
Lottery


Coca-Cola
WORLDWIDE PARTNER
SUGAR FREE
Diet
Coke

For many shops, economic precarity means that the public spaces of the shop are up for sale. Shop surfaces are sold not only to global brands, but also to other local businesses for their advertisements. Besides small contracts negotiated between shopkeepers and local businesses, a local advertising firm is also involved in the brokering of larger billboards on kiosks. This company is contracted to advertise on public street furniture too – on bus shelters and phone booths, for example. Advertising for things not sold in shop violates street trading regulations for kiosks, and planning regulations for corner shops. Still, many shops flout the regulations to balance the books. Revenue from large ads like these may cover a kiosk's monthly rent. Camden Council has long let these infringements slip by, though, as outlined in Chapter Four, there is both a renewed interest from the Council in kiosk management and increased control of shop fronts by neighbourhood associations. Not all shops are interested in corporate branding partnerships or putting up ads. But, for some, a brand partnership is a silver bullet. A brand partnership may mean not only a new canopy, but also a source of dependable income in face of economic uncertainty. However, for some shopkeepers the promise of partnerships goes unfulfilled.

"If you're lucky, the brands will come. For me, the rep came. She said, 'let me reorganise your fridge and then I'll see about a new canopy.' My canopy, it's broken. It doesn't roll. The fruit in the forecourt gets so hot. So she reorganised. That was in February. Now it's June. I still have not heard. I can't keep waiting, so I ordered a new canopy myself. And I put the fridge back the way it was before. When regular customers come, they want all the products in the same spots."

— Field notes, 19 June 2012

We look at all the branded post-it notes and the bags and Oyster card holders… "I don't need these things", Daleel says, "I need money." "I wonder what Lyca would pay to tattoo their logo on my eyelids," he muses. "When I blink, my customers will have subliminal messages." He wants the money owed from the branding. Every surface of the shop is dedicated to Lycamobile, including the canopy. But the canopy is broken, and as result, they will not pay him his monthly disbursement. "I was angry before. I don't care about it now. I'm hopeless. I can't do anything." It seems clear they won't do anything either. Why invest in the maintenance of the kiosk and repairs when this would mean the resumption of monthly payments? Especially when every surface is so boldly branded already? I suggest fixing it ourselves. With his hands in blue plastic disposable gloves, Daleel jumps on his ladder and yanks the canopy. It won't budge and he can't reconnect the support arms that were ripped off. He tries to put it out with a long hook, which may have one day twisted the canopy out… or was it automated? Daleel doesn't know. We root around amongst a knot of cables and I pull out one that is cut – a piece of black electrical tape on the end of what could be a live wire. These are bold efforts, but we cannot get the canopy to unfurl. These are some of the issues of inheriting the kiosk – a box of ad hoc materials – with no manual and an errant brand partner.

— Field notes, 1 August 2012

With or without incentives, most shopkeepers are open to the work of branding reps and embrace their corporate materials. Branded posters and other things advertise the products shopkeepers sell. The material acts as free advertising and may attract customers. Other objects given to the shop – like branded carrier bags, for example – mean savings for the shopkeepers, who will save on their purchase. In addition, beyond the free chocolate or cash payments, brands set up other schemes to get the shopkeeper onside.

> The SIM card companies and shopkeepers are working for each other, Jamil tells me. In addition to cash or top-up vouchers for advertising, shops get SIM cards for free from the mobile companies, which they may sell for up to £5. The SIM sale reaps 100% profit, and this is just a start for the shop. After a SIM is installed in a customer's phone, any top-ups benefit the original merchant. When a customer tops up by £5, the shop will receive £1.50 in top-up vouchers, traced back to the shop by the serial number of the card. When they top up a second time, the shop receives £1.50. A third time, they receive £2. Up to £5 is awarded to the kiosk – tracked by the serial number – and paid in top-up vouchers, which they then sell for 100% profit. Gains are great for the shop that gets a SIM into a customer's phone. And they benefit from the top-up no matter where the customer gets it. Everyone's trying to get SIMs in mobiles.
>
> — Field notes, 8 August 2012

This local brand management is part of a wider phenomenon of placing brands on commonplace objects in everyday life. As well as incentive schemes and work on exterior branding, a variety of branded material is bestowed on the shop's interior by some branding representatives. The post-it notes, Ramadan schedules, and Oyster card holders are not products for sale, or product samples, but objects of brand promotion. This promotional memorabilia "domesticate[s] experience and make[s] it portable [...] incorporating it within the individual life-narrative" (Moor 2003: 49, citing Stewart 1993). Via the Lycamobile Oyster card holder or the carrier bag, the brand is carried into different spaces and different activities. These objects might also be seen as a device of legitimation between business partners (Goldman & Papson 2006), or as gifts of goodwill. In either case, they contribute to the material complexity and heterogeneous brandscapes of the shop.

Displaying the brand

Beyond the economic incentives, outdoor promotional interventions, and branded loot, these corporations also try to play a role in the practices of display. They do this by offering infrastructure that shapes the curation of their products and by imparting expert knowledge in retail science. In so doing, corporations craft the ways in which their brand is formed in the shop. This is one way that "limited possibilities are designed into the brand" (Lury 2004: 151). It helps rein in ethical surplus produced through shopkeeping practice making it more useful to the core brand image (Arvidsson 2006: 129).

Brands try to anticipate the way the products will be accommodated in ad hoc shops and design display materials accordingly. For example, most cardboard boxes used to transport food products are "cut cases": designed with perforations that allow for sections of the box to be removed or folded back, transforming an object of logistics into one of display. In most chain shops, and some ad hoc shops as well, these boxes are emptied onto permanent display units and thrown away. However, the adaptability of the boxes anticipates the lack of "proper" display shelves in some shops.

There's no money at the kiosk to buy proper branded display units. Instead, we make full use of the boxes in which the products come. The boxes for crisps, water, chocolate, sweets, and gum are boldly branded with the product logos, colours, and slogans. The larger ones are often designed with perforations cut through their corrugated cardboard – low across the front, with a dip just the width of a hand perhaps, along the sides, and higher at the back. The boxes are designed to become provisional display units and call attention to the product in the absence of permanent shelves. It seems that some brands anticipate the ad hoc-ness of the shops' display. They are trying to manage the presentation of their products through these objects.

— Field notes, 31 July 2012

Branded materials may also try to manage the ad hoc-ness of shops through signage. In doing so, they try to close the gap between their interests in display and local improvisation. (See Gregson et al. (2002a) on negotiation and divergences between head office directives and ad hoc implementation by volunteers in charity shops.) For example, embedded in the array of vinyl stickers on the outside of Waney's Food Store, Wall's has included a grid-like frame for "Customer Advertisements." These rectangles are left empty. Unlike other shops, there are no community ads on Waney's window for sublets available or local Salsa dancing lessons. Though it could be seen as an indication of Wall's seeing a community role for themselves, this space may also be seen as trying to manage these interventions on a surface they have invested in. As another example, before the Olympic Games, Coca-Cola banners appeared with a space for shopkeepers to write in the date and time of the torch relay. Like the Wall's signage, this makes a controlled space for community announcements while also grounding the brand of the Games and Coca-Cola in the local context. Similarly, and as detailed below, a Wrigley's sweets rack tries to marshal candy bars and gum into the correct spots via the application of product labels on one side facing the consumers, while encouraging shopkeepers to call for advice and interventions on the other. These sorts of objects anticipate the ways in which the shops domesticate the brand.

Through the work of their representatives, global brands also shape modes of curation and change the organisation of objects. Retail science – along with a whole infrastructure of global branded knowledge – enters the ad hoc shop via the brand.

“In corner shops, soft drinks are the second biggest selling category under cigarettes; it’s a lucrative category for them. I work with retailers to maximise their sales potential. They gotta know how to advertise my products. It requires education. Like, people may buy 7up at the cash-and-carry because it’s cheaper than Sprite, but that’s short-sighted. Sprite sells better than 7up. I’ve got the sales reports to prove it to my clients. I visit them and tell them. A local café had our branding, but removed it for Cadbury. They got some chocolate for the branding, but they don’t normally sell chocolate in the café. They do, on the other hand, sell Coke. I had to explain the benefits and superiority of the Coke branding to these clients. So that’s what I do. And I provide marketing material to shops, and advise them on wholesalers’ prices and special offers. I look at their displays, taking pictures too. The perfect look of success is something like a Tesco Express… a small shop that may sell the premium brand and their own brand, but will stock much less than the big shops. Instead of 1,000 options, they’ll have maybe 200 options. They only stock the fastest selling products. Coke is always part of that. In the smaller shops, ideally, all the colas should be together. Look, here you have the Coke over here, and the Pepsi way up here. That’s not quite right. […] They used to think people shopped from left to right. But Coke did research. They filmed people…. People actually go vertically then horizontally, in more of a diamond shape. Overall, they look at the centre first. This is important knowledge for Coke and for the shopkeeper. If we look good, the shopkeeper will also do better.”

— Field notes, 5 September 2012

But the brands cannot manage the curation completely. As we saw, a fridge – once reorganised by a soft drink representative – is put back the way it was; Nestlé and Cadbury products end up together in Kit Kat box; a brand manager covers a Coca-Cola decal with a Lycamobile decal. As shown in this section, brands take place in the shop and, consequently, in the neighbourhood. Their deployment is bound up in a range of practices and materials and in the labour of branding representatives who endeavour to craft an affective atmosphere of the shop in line with their corporate visions. These efforts meet with the ad hoc-ness of the shop in particular and unpredictable ways.

Vernacular curation of the brand

The matter of branding is busy: windows are adorned with stickers, display units are assembled, fridges are reorganised in line with retail science and psychological research. Shopkeepers too are at work – rearranging, collecting, restocking, selling, dusting, and responding to changes in the market. As sites of brand consumption, the labour of the shops is part of the labour of branding. In this section, I highlight how the daily practice of shopkeeping shapes the meaning of brands. As well as the transformation in the hands of the shopkeepers, brands are also worked through and by the materiality of the shop. Through shopkeeping practice and the relationships of objects in display, the infrastructure of the brands is domesticated, humanised, and challenged (see Silverstone et al. 1992). They are also imbued with local meaning, new textures, and reanimated through creative practice. As I will show, branded things are not inert in this process; they exert their agency in different ways in local settings. Their thing power relates not only to their physicality, but also to their aura and attachments. As part of a dialectic, brands work with the display, while the shopkeeper and material work with them.

Chop wood, carry water. The work of the shop has a repetitive rhythm. The tasks feel domestic at times – cleaning, reorganising, displaying, counting… The environment too has a homey feel, what with the wooden panelling of the walls, the ornate brackets on the shelving units, the image of Vishnu overlooking the cash, and the fluted cylindrical cane stool behind the counter. A lot of time is spent in this shop, no wonder it feels like home. The domestic objects and practices have a soft, permeable feeling, which work through every experience of the shop – the congenial relations with customers, the casual style of display, and the placement of branded objects that travel through the shop. Today the broken Häagen Dazs fridge will be picked up. It waits on the pavement under a length of patterned cotton textile loosely knotted on either side. The Häagen Dazs logo is not visible, but the company's renowned white-on-gold pattern peeks out from under the drapery at the back corner. The corporate pattern looks unexpectedly domestic in this context, like a loosely crocheted doily – elegant, feminine, and traditional. The fabric is embellished with rich brown paisley spirals, which sit against a creamy taupe… a Dulce de Leche tone? The burgundy lotus flower trim that runs along each edge might even match the colour behind the company's cartouche, were we to draw the curtain to reveal the insignia. The textile not only evokes the brand's graphic design and feminine aesthetic, but also the ice cream's status as a comfort food designed for home consumption. It was such a quick gesture to cover the cooler like this. The cloth was at hand. The harmony is serendipitous, but synergistic.

— Field notes, 17 February 2012

Among a host of "heterogeneous actors […] including marketers, packagers, advertisers, designers, merchandiser, sellers," shopkeepers are "professionals of entangling" (Callon 2005: 6), tying brands to people and place. As mentioned in Chapter Five, shopkeepers are shoppers too (Gregson & Crewe 1997). Here, I find it useful to frame shopkeepers as consumers in order to discuss their meaningful interactions with brands and commodities. For de Certeau (1984) consumption is about use. As wholesale consumers, as keepers of the shop, and as creative curators, shopkeepers contribute to the meaning of the objects they use.

As outlined in the previous section, the brands and their representatives labour to craft space that is conducive to the spin of their brand narratives. Nevertheless, they seldom act as monolithic or oppressive forces in the shop (see Holt 2002). Though brands and branding are often drawn in that way (Klein 2000; Zukin 1995), considering them instead as co-productive shifts attention to the action and agency of users and objects. This openness not only empowers users, but also paradoxically serves the brand. Holt (2002: 88) writes that a passive consumer would be of little use to the branding system, which feeds on difference to innovate. In fact, "what has been termed 'consumer resistance' is actually a form of market-sanctioned cultural experimentation through which the market rejuvenates itself" (Holt 2002: 89; see also Klein 2000). But even seen as co-productive, the relationship between consumer and producer is not symmetrical, direct, or impartial (Lury 2004: 73). The brand balances the openness it needs to innovate with the conservation required to maintain its core forms (Arvidsson 2005). As they open themselves up, brands empower consumers to help the brand evolve in particular ways (Arvidsson 2005: 244); its unevenness is guaranteed by laws that limit interactivity (Lury 2004: 128). Though the brand might not always want to enrol the ethical surplus of the shop, it leaves some space open for the work of the shop and its keepers. Following Lury, then, the shop may not have the authority to transform the foundations of Coca-Cola or "London 2012", but it does find space – at a micro level – to creatively recast the meanings of brands for local contexts.

Thus, while they may appear colonised, the shops are not under the influence of "Coca-colonization" (see also Ritzer 2000 on the "McDonaldization of society"). In contrast, the shops challenge the idea that brands signal a loss of diversity and are disconnected to place (Pike 2011; Ritzer 2004). Brands mean different things and are used differently in different places (Jackson 2004). Though it may not be intentional (Pike 2009), through creative practices of display, shopkeepers transform brands, reworking their meanings for a local context. As these ad hoc assemblages are composed, branded things are used as raw material to make meaning (Hannerz 1992). This material use can be seen quite literally through the shop. A shopkeeper's personal invitation and penmanship is added to KitKat signage in the window, for example. Shopkeepers then act as "unruly bricoleurs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Please
ON SALE NOW
intelligent life
TEL : 02078319266
Call
Have a break. Have a Kit Kat.®
KitKat
NEW CHUNKY Peanut Butter
NEW Peanut Butter FLAVOUR
ON SALE
WE HAVE STOCK.
SO Enjoy
On TV
GOOD OFFER.

who engage in nonconformist producerly consumption practices" (Holt 2002: 88).

Indigenisation or domestication of mass culture has been discussed elsewhere. As described in Chapter Two, de Certeau (1984) and Jencks and Silver (2013) both celebrate the consumer's creative capacity to subvert mass culture through (ad hoc) tactics. Paul Willis' (1990a, 1990b) study of working-class English youth also highlights how young people creatively rewrite mass cultural production for their own needs. By experimenting with cultural materials and symbols, they develop their own "grounded aesthetics" that make cultural symbols more meaningful to them. A body of literature also concerns how the meaning of branded commodities is transformed in different settings. For example, Miller (1994) explores how the meanings of iconic brands are reworked in Trinidad, and Watson (1997) and Caldwell (2004) show how McDonald's is indigenised into the local cultures of Hong Kong and Russia (see also Edensor and Kothari (2006) on a market in Mauritius and Hannerz (1992) on globalisation and local innovation in Vienna, Calcutta, and San Francisco). Generally, then, understanding the geography of branding and branded objects is important if we are to understand the meanings of brands across space and time (Pike 2009). In the micro-geographies of the ad hoc shop, new meanings are cultivated.

Jim's kiosk feels like a beach-side changing hut, with its cornflower blue siding and striped blue and white woven polythene tarpaulin overhead. Inside too it feels like a fitting room; it is filled with shelves (only one soft drink deep), a stack of shrink-wrapped drink flats, a small Coca-Cola cooler, and Jim. A small, low table, covered with a red and white tarp displays his wares: a red plastic stand of Vidal Mega Super Sour Zoom lollipops; two boxes of gum – Extra Peppermint and Hubba Bubba Atomic Apple; a blue rubber bucket with cold water and bottles of Pepsi, Diet Coke, and flat water; and two green plastic crates, brimming with bags of sweets. The sweets are recognisable through their clear plastic bags: Haribo Frogs; Cadbury Creme Eggs; Lutti Fizzy Blue Bottles; Haribo Happy Cherries; Astra Flying Saucers... But these aren't the original packages. Jim buys the sweets at the cash-and-carry and re-bags them himself. The unmarked plastic pouches with opaque white backs present a new relationship of package to object. Unobscured by colourful characters and animated text, the candies are fully visible: naked in the clear bags. The texture of the plastic is different too, a bit more crinkly, with a higher pitch than the thicker branded packages. Are the sweets now consumed as mere commodities? The frankness of the display brings the unmarked bags to life. And the business crowd looking to satisfy a sweet tooth on the way to the Tube knows a Haribo Strawb when they see one. And Jim knows his regulars. They're happier to spend just a pound.

— Field notes, 18 June 2012

The lives of branded objects

In ad hoc shops, the sameness of branded objects confronts an atmosphere of difference. Use, wear, and tear implicated in shopkeeping practice, along with the material difference of the shop itself, transmutes the aura of standardised branded objects. Presence in, and movement through, the shop becomes part of the unique biography of each branded object. The meaning of each changes through practice and display.

In all retail environments, the point of sale signals the proliferation of individual object biographies (generally, see Appadurai 1986). Tic Tacs that share lives on the factory floor, on the wholesaler's shelf, and on the display racks in the shop, part ways for different handbags, pockets, desk drawers, and bins. As they intersect with the lives of consumers, all branded products become different. In some ad hoc shops, however, the moment when sameness becomes difference comes earlier in the life of the object. The configuration of displays and the ad hoc-ness of shopkeeping alter the biographies of individual objects. For example, Daleel's misadventure with the melted chocolate, highlighted in Chapter Five, meant that the material consistency of some candy bars was different than others, regardless of shared origins. The work of the shop challenges the idea that all objects are the same.

I have yet to see the sale of a bag of marshmallows. There was only one bag when I first arrived at the kiosk. Today, a few more are here, bought recently at the cash-and-carry. I don't know how it happened, but the hole on the older bag – used to hang it on the peg – ripped through. For a few weeks now, it has been taped up so it hangs with the others. Today the tape pulls off and it falls again. So, with Daleel's consent, I take a pair of scissors and cut across the end of the package. What a satisfying gesture. A problem solved. Surely no one would notice that the fused edge of the marshmallow bag was half an inch shorter than the other ones in the shop or that the edge is now straight instead of cut in a tight zigzag. Someone might, however, begin to wonder why the rest of the "seductively soft" Princess Marshmallows are hanging up behind the cash while this bag is in a box with other random sweets on the counter.

— Field notes, 22 August 2012

Is it humidity or just time that causes the postcards to curl in the racks of the forecourts? I watch as tourists flip through them, invariably picking the ones towards the back of the rack over those out front which bow before the elements.

— Field notes, 17 May 2012

Giant umbrellas are open in front of the shop. They perform the dual role of shielding other umbrellas from the rain and attracting the eye of customers from a distance. Plus, some are celebratory. The union jack umbrellas are selling like mad. It seems it's the summer of national pride, what with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games on either end. Plus, shopkeepers tell me the Royal Wedding is still having lasting effects. As well as the unbranded ones, a Dunlop union jack umbrella is open on the pavement. It is pinned to the material on the rack behind to keep it from blowing away. The strain on the nylon is visible. "So it's a display object, but is this one also for sale?" I ask. "Could be, if the others sell out," I'm told. He might cut a deal for the wear and tear.

— Field notes, 20 June 2012

Even more than products, the surfaces of branded display objects tell stories of practice. The lives of these objects are transformed by the lives and practice of the shopkeepers (see Gregson 2007). Routines, use, space, and time imbue once identical factory-made branded objects with a sense of unique character. In a photographic series of the Wall's ice-cream signs, I reflect on, and reveal, the individuality and vibrancy of these everyday urban things. Tuning into the material difference and nuance of the mass-produced objects celebrates them as one of a kind. These objects are at once part of both a uniform global brand and a local site of action. Each sign tells stories of practice and experience. As well as the strains of practice, juxtaposition brings new local meanings to branded objects. As shown, forecourt stands produced by Wall's and Coca-Cola are used by shopkeepers as display boards to announce other products in the shop. They are written on, taped to, and used for purposes unintended by the corporate bodies that created them. Branded display infrastructure is treated like any surface in the shop. It also may become a commonplace part of the city. To consider its invisibility and ubiquity in urban space, I have played with the images, inserting the Wall's sign in other places, wondering where it might be noticed in a different way.


WALL'S
www.walls.co.uk


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
www.walls.co.uk


WALL'S


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
COBRA


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream

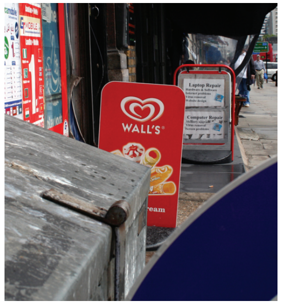

Play here
WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


CREEK
WALL'S
Love Ice Cream

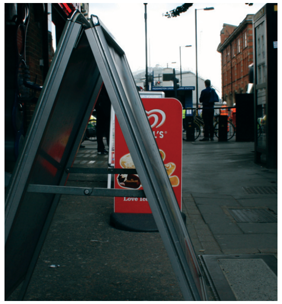

WALL'S
www.walls.co.uk


TICKETS HERE
WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream




WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


MINI CABS


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


Instant passport photos
WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


Trafalgar Square 24
ANY BEER CANS 4 FOR £ 5.00
WALL'S
MAGNUM
Cornetto
TWISTER
Solero
MAGNUM
Calippo
Love Ice Cream
THE IRISH
ON SALE


Coca-Cola
SANDWICHES From £1
THE LONDON 2012
OLYMPIC GAMES
BUY ANY 500ML FOR £1.15
WORLDWIDE PARTNER
Coca-Cola


FIRE EXIT
WALL'S
Love Ice Cream


WALL'S

The Wrigley's sweet rack is loud with branded logos, shapes, and colours. The noise is amplified by the branded stickers on the rack shelves, which don't always match the product directly above. Although I try to match them up when restocking, correspondence is unattainable. Today, we don't have (Wrigley's) 5 gum to fill the allotted spot. Coordination would also require two full boxes of both (Wrigley's) Airwaves Black and (Wrigley's) Spearmint Sugarfree Gum. We only have a half box of each. As the stickers suggest, Wrigley's produces these products and would probably rather that other brands – the Soothers, Smints, and Tic Tacs – weren't nestled beside their wares. The stickers on each shelf disclose the age of the unit, and the long period when the unit was stored in the newspaper box outside, jostling with metal pegs and small wire crates. The stickers are scratched and scrapped. The unit's metal frame has a rough feel to it, but I suppose it always has. It feels industrial – to the eye and to the touch. From the back, it feels like an un-branded utility object. Its crudeness is enhanced by the found screw we jimmied into one of the holes on the brushed steel supports to buttress the top shelf. Whereas the stickers are scuffed and the rear of the shelf truly feels backstage, the unit's shiny, tear-shaped shelf ends are still pristine: bright, blue, bubbly, "WRIGLEY" in heavy, plain-speaking all-caps embossed on each end. The sky blue picks up the same tone in the little packages of Extra Peppermint Sugarfree Gum. A calculated choice: it is the bestselling gum and one of the most sold items in the shop.

— Field notes, 1 August 2012


O N
Happy Birthday
LONDON

Brand-objects are at times disoriented in the shop, flowing through space and states of being without a particular goal (Lash & Lury 2007). Some branded material is actively managed. Other material is left to wilt in the shops. As material at hand, it is often treated no differently than unbranded matter. Branded and unbranded stuff see practices of making-do and mending. Branded products and their infrastructure become ad hoc cyborgs: part branded object, part local handiwork, part ravages of time.

I encounter the Cornetto adjacent King's Cross for the first time on a Friday evening. There is a number of injection-moulded Cornettos in the neighbourhood, but none like this. It seems to reinforce fading stereotypes of the King's Cross area: it looks like a Cornetto from the bad side of town… like it has been in a bar fight or two and come out worse for wear. But it bears its bandages proudly and becomes less menacing as I approach. Utilitarian lengths of packing tape that hold the top of the cone together cross a layer of wrapping paper adorned with Happy Birthday wishes and cartoon bears. The material is unexpected, the colours, complementary. The crisscross over the wrapping paper is neat and even, which contrasts with the tape on the sides which is applied in a rough-and-ready fashion in multiple layers. As if the Cornetto could not properly articulate the presence of ice cream in its altered state, an additional sign is taped to the cone asking "WHY NOT ICE CREEM."

— Field notes, 13 July 2012

The shininess of the brand is reworked through creative local practice, dust, time, and display. Through the work of shopkeepers and the juxtaposition of things, these shops reconnect material economies with symbolic economies. By shifting the aura of the brand, ad hoc practice calls attention to the physicality of the branded object. We are reacquainted with the object's use-value and matter. In this way, ad hoc practice summons the materials over their materiality (Ingold 2007). The dressing on the giant Cornetto summons its fragility and physical qualities. The colour and texture of the Haribo gummy bears is candidly expressed in clear plastic bags, unmediated by the usual packaging. The Coca-Cola sign becomes a display surface for another product. This reworking might be seen as a way of deadening branded objects. But where branded objects do brush with commodity status, they are reenergised with local experience and meaning. Following Bennett (2010), reanimation of the branded objects in the shop endows them with new vitality and agentic qualities. The aura of the brand mixes with more home-spun meanings of the shop, fashioning a new thing power, which may not be necessarily more powerful, or useful to the brand, but is more evocative in a local context.

Curating the legitimacy of the brand

If this material reworking is perceived not as a threat but a recasting, another aspect of shopkeeping practice may be deemed slightly more menacing to the brand. Through ad hoc channels of distribution and display, brands may "spin out of the control of the makers" (Lash & Lury, 2007: 4), thereby contributing unintended ethical surplus (Arvidsson 2006) to the brand. In some cases, brands in these shops are not what they seem. The security of the brand and its sense of authenticity may be questioned in the shop.

Ad hoc supply chains are unpredictable. Gregson and her colleagues (2002a) detailed how distribution networks in alternative retail spaces may differ from those of mainstream spaces. In ad hoc shops, the routes taken by some branded products are different than mainstream retail establishments. A can of Mirinda sold at the Tesco around the corner experienced a different journey to the neighbourhood than that in 'our' kiosk.

Mo gets frustrated that people question the genuineness of his suitcases – which are "the same as John Lewis." I believe they are the real article, though their display beside a stack of mock Cath Kidston tote bags surely doesn't augment their sense of legitimacy.

— Field notes, 18 July 2012)

"You've got to be careful at the cash-and-carry," Daleel warns me. "Here, read it!" I cup the cool orange aluminium can in my hand, turning it to read the thin French text on the label. My accent is unpracticed, but convincing and entertaining for Daleel. He and his brother were so swept up by the price, that they bought five flats of Mirinda. Only later, did they realise it was French. "Some people, they can't tell, but some, they can. It's not the same as the British. It doesn't taste quite the same. Not only the cash-and-carrys. You have to watch out in dodgy places. I go out for fried chicken by my flat. You have to check. Is the Coke a Polish Coke? They all sell it. 50p. So cheap! But always Polish."

— Field notes, 6 August 2012

When this project began, I started buying my produce from street vendors. The value is excellent and the quality is fine, as long as the fruit and veg are consumed rather quickly. I enjoy the interaction of seeing "my guy" in front of Gray's Inn Traders. He often gives me an extra bowl of oranges or some grapes "for the little one." When I mention my shopping habits to a neighbour, she is alarmed, not just because I buy from the vendors on the street, but that I would feed this rogue produce to my child too. "But you don't know where it comes from?!" She exclaims. "I suppose I don't know where the produce at Waitrose comes from either," I shrug.

— Field notes, 25 November 2013

Goodwill and trust – essential components of the brand (de Chernatony 2001) – may be shaken in the shops. Street trading's association with knock-offs in particular unsettles trust in both the brand and practices of the shops (see also Everts & Jackson 2009 on trust in food retailing). As highlighted in Chapter Five, pricing practices may also be variable. On account of this ad hoc-ness, even some shopkeepers send customers to chain stores over other ad hoc shops. "Other shops do something funny," Daleel tells me. "At Tesco the price is fixed" (Field notes, 30 August 2012). Though the wider perceptions of these shops are beyond my focus here, the relationship between the brand and the shop may be contentious.

In this section, I discussed how the practice and the matter of shops domesticates and indigenises the global brand. I outlined how the lives of objects in the shops, once characterised by sameness, become different. Practice may confront us with the use-value of objects, but also brings new local meanings to objects, meanings which may be dubious at times. This section has highlighted the localised production of the brand. While this has been helpful to illustrate the brand labour of the shops, it may oversimplify the relationship between the local and global forces working through. These are not as simple as top-down and bottom-up.

In(ter)dependence: the brand, the ad hoc, the shopkeepers

Forces tangle and tie ad hoc shops and brands together. While friction occurs at times, co-dependence is accepted. The endurance of the global brand and local shop are intertwined. Because brands are dynamic – adapting feed-back and feed-forward (Lury 2004: 69) – the curation of shops contributes to their local production. Conversely, while the local context adapts the brand, so too does the brand adapt for the local context (Jackson 2004; see also Featherstone 1995). Though forces emanate from above and below, they are not adversarial. Ad hoc shops are dependent materially and economically on brands. And brands are often surprisingly ad hoc in their deployment. In this final section, I describe this interweaving and interdependence. I outline how brands are claimed by, and contribute to, the ad hoc aesthetic, and how the shops make space for the brand. I return to ideas of neighbourhood aesthetics, showing that the brand is often deemed part of the "problem" of the shops. Finally, I use the example of Lycamobile to describe how shops may contribute ethical surplus to the production of the brand.

It came as a surprise that ad hoc shopkeepers are not particularly pro-independent and hold virtually no hostility towards the brand or chain. The high street revitalisation plans and policy documents detailed in Chapter Four laud independent shops and recoil at the prospect of clone towns dominated by high street chains (see for example APPSSG 2005; New Economics Foundation 2005; Portas 2011). Councillors (interview, 30 July 2012; interview, 19 November 2012) and planning officials (interview, 2 November 2012; interview, 5 November 2012) hold similar reverence for the independents, believing it nobler to be on your own (see also Ritzer 2000 on Mom and Pop stores in North America). Admittedly, the independent shops endorsed by public officials are not of the ad hoc variety. Still, it may be a middle-class preoccupation to extol these shops' detachment from the world of global chains. And as illustrated above, they are not detached at all. Brands are not external to the shop, but intrinsic to their being.

> "If the souvenir kiosk doesn't work, then maybe I'll try for a Costa or Pret franchise and run it from my stall."
>
> — Field notes, 12 July 2012

The independence of these shops is not a moral stance. For shopkeepers, there is no romance in this autonomy. For some, ad hoc-ness means a bottom rung on the economic ladder and a source of embarrassment to their families. Furthermore, ad hoc shops do not reject global capitalism, even if, through their material, they often unwittingly reject the bourgeois form it often takes (see Latham 2002). As brought up again in Chapters Seven and Eight, association with international trademarks, embracing the brand, or even owning a franchise bring security and attachment to global economic stability. Conversely, forces working through the brands are unexpectedly ad hoc.

Ad hoc-ness of the brand

Despite their global status, brands often penetrate the shops in informal ways. The distribution of the brand relies on creative practice of brand managers who match material with the distinct environment of the shop in collaboration with shopkeepers. The material qualities of branded stuff and the variations of the local shop environment demand improvisation. In some circumstances, brands need to embrace an ad hoc approach to work through the material difference of the shops. In other cases, the branded products and materials themselves are surprisingly ad hoc.

We walk along the street looking at the branding. Many of the windows are adorned with Oyster branded stickers. Areeb tells me it would have been especially difficult to replicate the same design with Lycamobile stickers, what with the stairwells that descend in front of the windows. The Oyster stickers are double-sided and in this case were applied to the windows from the inside. Lycamobile stickers only have adhesive on the back, which constrains the design process. But this is part of the challenge. Each project has to be approached individually and imaginatively. Here it would necessitate some precarious leaning and some ladders balanced on steps. I can see him calculating how it could be done.

— Field notes, 17 October 2012

As they moved towards their expiration, the Halls were shifted to the three-tiered Plexiglas unit by the cash. Today their time has come. We look around the shop for the next best candidate to move to this privileged position. We scan the sweet rack and the spread of boxes on either side. "Maybe the Polo mints?" Daleel suggests. "They are popular and then there will be three tiers of mint cylinders." We lever out the boxes of Halls – which never fit quite right in the case – and get to work cleaning out the dust – with the brush, then spray and cloth. It begins to shine. The Polo mints shifted from the Wrigley's unit aren't quite enough, so we go about opening more packs that were stored in the crawl space above. The cylinders are in shiny green foil bags. The burst of mint is fantastic as the packages are popped opened – a great contrast from the smell of dust and cleaning spray. As I place all the rolls in the case, I need to flip many to ensure they are all facing forward. I peer back at the expired Halls by the bin and lift a couple of rows. Here too, some are facing backwards in the box. But isn't this work done by machines? I assumed a factory-made product would see more regularity. I suppose brands are cobbled together by people too. So we have to pay attention. And there's some irony here. If I saw products backwards on the shelves, I would probably attribute it to the ad hoc-ness of the shopkeeping. Instead, we are correcting the ad hoc-ness of the branding in our shopkeeping practice.

— Field notes, 1 August 2012

A new Lyca brochure holder greets me as I arrive at the kiosk. It also faces me behind the cash; the back panel is facing the wrong way. "Something's not quite right with this stand," I say. Perhaps it was put together wrong. We remove the brochures and unhook the little cardboard tabs to unfold the unit. But it's all one piece and cannot be flipped. Part of the holder was printed on the wrong side, and distributed to the shops all the same."

— Field notes, 1 August 2012

As illustrated, brands are sometimes reordered in the shop. Other times, through practices of shopkeeping they are reclaimed into ad hoc aesthetics. Equally, brands contribute to the shops' material ad hoc-ness. The material difference of each brand, together with the sheer number of brands in the shop, amplify the complex textures of the shops' micro-geographies. Unlike neighbourhood branding initiatives which endeavour to pare down material to establish a narrative, brand interventions in the shop add material. The layering of brands increases the complexity of the ad hoc shop and contributes to the material ad hoc-ness of the shop. Conversely, ad hoc shops make space for the brand in ways other shops cannot.

Areeb and I pass the Portland Food & Wine. “Those shops, we don’t go for those. They sell our SIMs, but the staff can’t make decisions about posters and everyday things. We go for independents instead.” This surprises me. The two Portland Food & Wine shops in the neighbourhood exhibit a lot of ad hoc-ness. Obviously these shops make deals with the brands, but the process requires more consideration. On the ground, brands like Lycamobile move quickly; they can’t wait for head office decisions. And so, somewhat ironically, the franchise retains more ad hoc-ness than independents who can sell their surfaces more readily to a brand.
— Field notes, 17 October 2012

Here, independence means decisions are made on the fly. For this reason, independents are easier to inhabit than chains or symbol groups, which trade together under a common brand and manage their displays more tightly. Brands benefit from the malleability of ad hoc shops’ material and practice. The complex texture of the ad hoc shop makes space for the brand, which other chain shops cannot. The theme of embracing difference is something I return to again in Chapters Seven and Eight. The shop embraces difference of all kinds. Here this includes various expressions of corporate branding.


NEW BLOOMSBURY HALA
FOOD STORE
020 7713
SPECIALIST IN BANGLADESHI FOOD, FISH & VEGETA
Lycamobile
Call the world for less
Lycamobile
Call the world for less
UNLIMITED
FREE CALLS & TEXTS
1p /min
SGT
020 7717 5555
65

Branding the shop & neighbourhood aesthetics

Though they are deployed in ad hoc ways, many brand interventions are designed to be as big and bold as possible. The publicness and ad hoc-ness of this deployment is contentious. Whereas brands often try to create slick, smooth, controlled surfaces, their work on the exterior of ad hoc shops is often charged with the opposite: tattiness. So tight is this relationship between the brand and shop that cleaning up a street or display may mean cleaning up the brand. As part of the Council's concern with de-cluttering the high street and the shop, the brand has been targeted. For Cronin (2010), denunciations of urban advertising are based on notions of class, order, and urban aesthetics. This likely underlies the criticism in part. In addition, Iveson (2012) suggests that outdoor advertising is deemed problematic when it competes with other place-making narratives. The place-branding work of the local business and neighbourhood associations, outlined in Chapter Four, is threatened by ad hoc brand signage and postering.

"These Lyca guys, they target the Asian shops. Their branding lowers the tone. It looks like the worst part of East London. You see this in poor areas, and here, it's not a poor area. In some cases the shopkeepers haven't been given permission to put up the stickers. This is breaking building code. You need planning permission to have advertising up all the time. Well, in the window it's allowed, as long as it's inside, I think. The newspaper boxes, that's a grey area. In Camden they issue ASBOs for rock concert posters. I want to do the same for these SIM companies. They break planning regulations. It is not cost effective for the Council to take action on this, so it has gone untackled. It comes down to the community associations. Maybe the owners don't really care, or maybe they feel threatened by the companies. But I care. It looks like trash. But then, you know, it's funny, because in one of the shops – the meat shop – the Lyca branding meant that they took all the other debris from their window, which actually improved the shop overall."

— Interview with an official involved in the management of local shops, 30 July 2012

Mia: "Some community association people I spoke with, they talk about branding being messy."

Areeb: "But branding can be beautiful. It's a creation. Each shop had a different style. Here, this is some of my best work."

We stand in front of the Halal meat shop. The red window frames are rimmed with the cobalt Lycamobile blue. Incidentally, these same tones are picked up in the signage above. This couldn't have been planned, but it does bring a sense of harmony. Two prominent logos are spaced in the centre top of each window, with two smaller ones in the lower outside corners. Through the frame, we see a row of Bengali newspapers hanging by their corners from large S hooks linked over a piece of untreated blond wood. To the left, three tiers of metal crates display produce: yellow onions, red onions, and bags of shallots. The window is inviting. There's a sense of symmetry and balance. The execution was clean and precise. The tape was applied smoothly, despite the stairwell dropping in front of the glass.

"I love this one. It makes me proud, this work."

— Field notes, 17 October 2012

"I know the stickers are peeling. I thought, maybe I'll remove them, especially cause Lyca didn't pay, but I don't know now. If I took them off, where would I put them? I have to close the shop to put them in the bin and I couldn't do that. It's their responsibility – Lyca's responsibility – to maintain them. I shouldn't have to do this. So they will stay for now."

— Field notes, 1 August 2012

The ethical surplus of ad hoc shops

Brands unfold in different ways in different places; they cannot escape their geographies (Pike 2009). The global brands discussed here work through micro-geographies of the shop at a localised level. They are adapted for a local context not only by the shopkeeper, but also via the practices of the brand representatives. I have outlined too how brands intersect with the material of the shop. But what about the changes to the meaning of the brand itself?

Though this chapter does not promise a genealogy of the brands in the shop, I want to, once more, turn to Lycamobile to discuss how the meaning of the branding and the shop are interconnected. A brand like Lycamobile is at home in the shop. It has leveraged its associations with ad hoc shops and incorporated them as part of the branding strategy. As a mobile SIM card and long-distance provider, Lycamobile is branded around global ties. The Lycamobile handbook, which accompanies the company's SIM card, assures that cheap call rates "mean you can stay in touch for longer with the most important people in your world." Like all its promotional materials, this booklet also features the Lycamobile mascot: a figure in a kitschy suit supporting a large globe placed over his or her head with a gloved hand. This is a global body: sexless, raceless, ageless, placeless. For Holt (2006a), brands act as ideological parasites, drawing from cultural myths developed through other cultural forms. For its part here, Lycamobile works through the myth of global connectedness. The brand's evocation of the global citizen – as bridge between global and local – is reinforced by the identity of the translocal shops. As I highlight in Chapter Seven, these shops are sites that connect here and there. In addition, many shopkeepers are Lycamobile's target consumers.

Ramadan ends soon. We talk about it every day… about what he will eat when he breaks his fast. Daleel loves talking about food. There is always a Lycamobile Ramadan calendar kicking about, which we use to frame the discussions. There are no call rates on the card, just a Lycamobile logo and prayer times. Daleel too uses it to keep his prayers in check. "Do you think they would ever create a bank holiday card in the same way?" I ask. Daleel says they target foreign people. Tourists? Perhaps somewhat, what with the Lyca Oyster card sleeves with underground maps and the focus on tourist spots. "It's for people like me – foreigners living in London. There are many Lycamobile ads in Whitechapel," he tells me, knowingly.

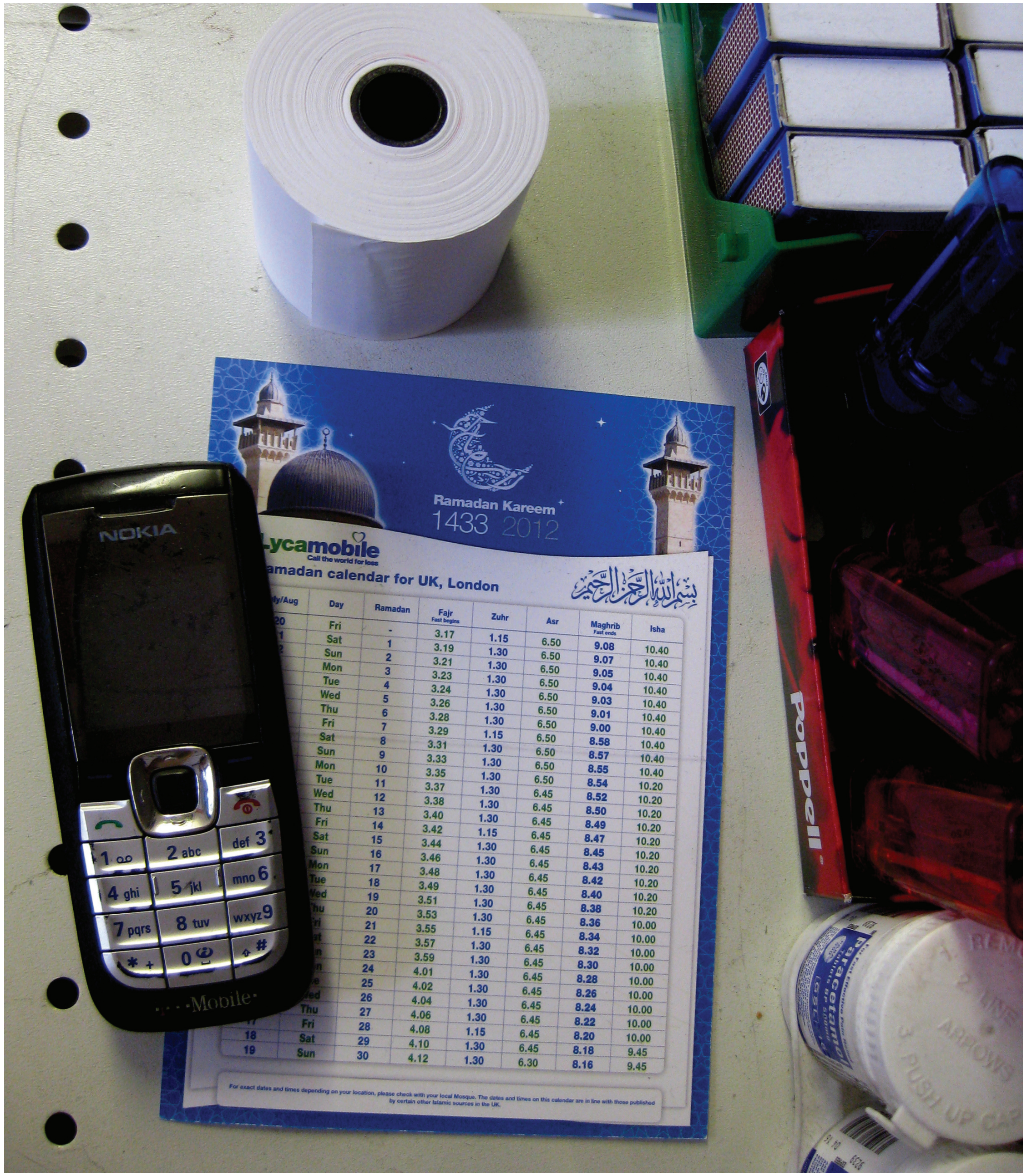
— Field notes, 1 August 2012

As a memento, the Ramadan card is part of the Lycamobile brand experience. It is about connecting with people: the brand manager with the shopkeeper; the shopkeeper with his faith and with his community. Brands are valuable when they are embedded in, and contribute to, social and cultural life (Holt 2006b: 300). Here the shopkeepers and the translocal shop work towards completing the brand with their ethical surplus – inadvertently contributing their experience and their bodies as "global citizens" to sell Lycamobile products. As I show in Chapter Seven, Daleel is a Lycamobile customer too.

At a local level, branded displays are negotiated between individuals whose interests are surprisingly similar. For example, the kiosk owners and the Lycamobile representative are from a similar place in the world, share language, and discuss shared challenges.

The shopkeeper and the SIM sales rep, they bicker, but it's more in jest. It feels like they're on a level. They ask about each other's families. They both have children back home who they haven't met. Their backgrounds are so similar – they could probably swap each other's jobs. On the street, there's no sense that the brand is more important than the shop. They're both just trying to make it work and know they need each other.

— Field notes, 29 August 2012



Lycamobile
Call the world for less

amadan calendar for UK, London

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ly/Aug	Day	Ramadan	Fajr Fast begins	Zuhr	Asr	Maghrib Fast ends	Isha
20	Fri	-	3.17	1.15	6.50	9.08	10.40
1	Sat	1	3.19	1.30	6.50	9.07	10.40
2	Sun	2	3.21	1.30	6.50	9.05	10.40
	Mon	3	3.23	1.30	6.50	9.04	10.40
	Tue	4	3.24	1.30	6.50	9.03	10.40
	Wed	5	3.26	1.30	6.50	9.01	10.40
	Thu	6	3.28	1.30	6.50	9.00	10.40
	Fri	7	3.29	1.15	6.50	8.58	10.40
	Sat	8	3.31	1.30	6.50	8.57	10.40
	Sun	9	3.33	1.30	6.50	8.55	10.40
	Mon	10	3.35	1.30	6.50	8.54	10.20
	Tue	11	3.37	1.30	6.45	8.52	10.20
	Wed	12	3.38	1.30	6.45	8.50	10.20
	Thu	13	3.40	1.30	6.45	8.49	10.20
	Fri	14	3.42	1.15	6.45	8.47	10.20
	Sat	15	3.44	1.30	6.45	8.45	10.20
	Sun	16	3.46	1.30	6.45	8.43	10.20
	Mon	17	3.48	1.30	6.45	8.42	10.20
	Tue	18	3.49	1.30	6.45	8.40	10.20
	Ved	19	3.51	1.30	6.45	8.38	10.20
	hu	20	3.53	1.30	6.45	8.36	10.00
	ri	21	3.55	1.15	6.45	8.34	10.00
	t	22	3.57	1.30	6.45	8.32	10.00
	n	23	3.59	1.30	6.45	8.30	10.00
	n	24	4.01	1.30	6.45	8.28	10.00
	e	25	4.02	1.30	6.45	8.26	10.00
	ed	26	4.04	1.30	6.45	8.24	10.00
	Thu	27	4.06	1.30	6.45	8.22	10.00
	Fri	28	4.08	1.15	6.45	8.20	10.00
18	Sat	29	4.10	1.30	6.45	8.18	9.45
19	Sun	30	4.12	1.30	6.30	8.16	9.45

For exact dates and times depending on your location, please check with your local Mosque. The dates and times on this calendar are in line with those published by certain other Islamic sources in the UK.

Though this all sounds quite cosy, we mustn't lose sight of the unevenness of resources and access between the shops and the corporate brands that inhabit them. While neighbourhood brand representatives are not unlike the shopkeepers, the brands they represent have capital at heart. As Pike (2009: 620) writes, "brands' underlying dynamic of differentiation is predicated on the search for, exploitation and (re)production of economic and social inequalities over space and through time." Brands benefit from the precarity of the shop and relative lack of regulation, when compared to other modes of public branding – on billboards, for example. In the case of exterior branding, even as brands pull out of agreements, shopkeepers are stuck with their branded canopies. Materially too, they may disadvantage the shop. As extensive brand stickers monopolise the visual economy of the shop, they replace layers of other materials and hand-made signs. This visual claim to space is suggestive of ownership, not unlike the roots of branding itself: it is a mark of entitlement. Though shops are often quick to build these layers again, this may challenge the democracy of the outdoor media landscape for a time (see Iveson 2012).

Conclusions: ad hoc brandscapes

Shopkeeping is a creative practice, whose curation and material is shaped by many forces. In this chapter, I detail how brands work with the shop. I outline the intimate relationship between the two, suggesting that these complex associations are often mutually beneficial. Brand managers deploy material and retail science to shape the affective atmosphere of the shop. Shopkeepers make space for the brand, and domesticate it for the local context. I show how a conventional binary between "global brand" and "local shop" only goes so far. I argue that the brand works in ad hoc ways and that the shops yearn for the stability of corporate attachment. The untidy associations between the shops and brands also crop up in relation to urban aesthetics, as the branding of shops clashes with the branding of the neighbourhood and ideas of order. I argue that these intricacies suggest not a dichotomy, but a condition in which the shops are a part of these brands and the brands are a part of these shops.

In some shops, brands represent constitutive material building blocks, inside and out. Following Venturi and his colleagues (1972: 12), and as visualised on the pages that follow, without the brands, "there is no place." Though some shops are composed largely of branded materials, no one brand dominates the way of seeing or the material form of the shop. Brands are composite elements of these vernacular spaces. As such, the shops described through this chapter do not behave like the all-encompassing brandscapes of Prada or Nike stores. Even as companies like Cadbury or Lycamobile may try, the material of the shop cannot be made to adhere to one trademark. In light of this, I want to argue that these are ad hoc brandscapes, visibly made up composites of trademarks, logos, and attachments, which creatively adapt and sample brands to work for local purposes.

The shops are too heterogeneous for colonisation, by either the brands or the branding efforts of local neighbourhood associations, as discussed in Chapter Four. The brand itself contributes to the heterogeneity of the shop, ironically thwarting its own clean entry into it. Brands are part of the shops' complex assemblages and affective atmospheres. Through time, material, and the efforts of shopkeepers and branding representatives, brands are layered in the shop. While branded, they remain loose, malleable, and inclusive. They are still very much ad hoc. As I argue throughout this chapter, via creative practices of domestication, the shops absorb and rework the global brand to give it local meaning.

The brand's place in the shop may bring a new inflection to the idea of co-production. As I contend, the shopkeepers and the material environment help produce the brand. Because brands are co-produced with the shop, which is itself composed of brands, the brands in the shop are produced by other brands there as well. Each vibrates, shifting the associations between them and what is possible.

Through their embrace of the brand, the shops and their keepers are tangled up in international systems of capital and global trademarks. The global is a part of the local in the shop. This notion leads to Chapter Seven, which works through how the shop brings global forces home at another register.


TOBACCO
NO ID
NO
SALE!
CASIO


RED LION
STREET WC1
WANEY'S FOOD STORE
23

7

Precarity & translocality

For all shopkeepers, the current retail climate is challenging. For others, struggles of newness and the impenetrability of the labour market add to the strife. A state of hyper-precarity pervades many lives in the ad hoc shop, bringing with it financial, social, and material strain. The translocality of the shop may mean an additional set of challenges, and openings too. Objects in the shop fold space together – maintaining and creating relationships, connecting here and there. They may also complicate the rapport between the translocal shop and the neighbourhood. The affect of multicultures and belonging raises the politics of material and difference. Conflating the material in the shop with the racialised bodies of the shopkeepers mean both are "out of place." Still, the everydayness of the shops might provide a site of meaningful exchange. Like the ad hoc, multiculture's promise lies in its untidiness.

Precarity

Keeping shop is marked with a degree of precarity. This refrain has echoed through much of the thesis thus far. In Chapter Four, for example, I outlined ways in which the urban material expression of the shop is put under pressure by shifts in urban governance and neighbourhood change. In Chapter Five, I discussed how micro materials are exhausted through practice, implying a lack of material and financial resources. In Chapter Six, I suggested that interventions of the brand are welcomed into the shop to contend with financial pressure. Here, I outline other ways that the shop is under duress and how these challenges impinge on the material and practices of the shop, and on the subjectivities of the shopkeepers. Although other voices crop up, I mainly draw on the stories of one shopkeeper – Daleel – to narrate this chapter (on the merits of bio-ethnographic approaches to research see Crapanzano 1980; Rabinow 2007; Shostack 1981). Many shopkeepers discussed instabilities relating to the changing urban, political and retail landscapes, issues of self-employment and financial unpredictability, matters of immigration, and discrimination. Like material innovations, these political challenges call for resourcefulness – for ad hoc solutions.

As explored in Chapters Two and Four, shops can be seen as assemblages of forces: a tangle amongst the packets of mints, the skills of the shopkeeper, the street trading policies, and the dust that collects on the shelving, for example. Because they are motion, assemblages are, by their nature, precarious (De Landa 2002). For Judith Butler (2009), precariousness is all around us. She writes that it

> implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous. These are not necessarily relations of love or even of care, but constitute obligations towards others, most of whom we cannot name and do not know, and who may or may not bear traits of familiarity to an established sense of who "we" are. (Butler 2009: 14)

While precariousness is a shared condition of life, the state of precarity, Butler argues, is politically induced (see also Waite 2009). Precarity is the social inequity that emerges from particular political situations. The term can, and has, been used to describe the conditions known to many shopkeepers in my neighbourhood. As I will stress again, precarity is not inherent to the shopkeepers, but a circumstance that has emerged through time and place. For Daleel, precarity works its way through the shop in a number of ways: in relation to his financial situation; to the legality of the shop tenure; and to his immigration standing. This chapter tells his story and others.

Of course, some ad hoc shops in the neighbourhood do exceptionally well. The fluidity of independence may mean instability for some, but also begets flexibility, which can be an advantage. Some shops respond to local changes and react quickly when new products come to market. For example, one shop on Marchmont Street, which once sold household goods, reinvented itself overnight in response to the opening of a Robert Dyas in the nearby Brunswick Centre. Agility can contribute to financial success when shops get it right. Combine this with high-traffic locations, paid advertising, and high mark-ups and some businesses prosper. Others do not. Financial disappointment is pervasive and emotional. Longings for prosperity are wrapped up in desires to secure a livelihood and in feelings of personal worth.

> Daleel is worried about the takings. This should be the busiest time of the year – with the tourists and the weather – and still, no one is coming. We sit and wait and watch people pass by. A fleeting glance or two, but not one purchase in the last hour. To make a profit, Daleel needs to clear about £400/day. Today is even slower than yesterday. Then he made only £170, which means about £50 profit after rent. If he had taken wages, the kiosk would have made nothing. Daleel is still working for free. His brother told him to take wages – around £40-£50 per day, but Daleel says the takings aren't enough. Perhaps he would pay himself if he took in £200 or £300 per day, but not like this. He doesn't mind working for free for now. "It's for my brother. We want this to work. We want success. But we don't understand… it is a matter of time. So we wait."
>
> — Field notes, 7 August 2012

Shops under threat

As suggested, the precarity faced by the shops is manifold. Over the last decade, the threat to independent shops has been a particular theme in the media and in policy documents. This has accompanied the panic over the "death of the high street" outlined in Chapter Four. Whereas in that chapter I focused on the material considerations of those discourses, here I draw on some of the same literature and policy documents to frame the economic challenges facing the shops.

The government is concerned for the health of the high street and its economic impacts. The comprehensive review of high street research released alongside the Portas Review describes the increased challenges to traders of the last ten years, attributable to squeezed margins, pressure from large grocers, increased rents and business rates, and the minimum wage, all of which have grown much more quickly than sales (BIS 2011, see also All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group (APPSSG) 2006; Carmona 2014; New Economics Foundation 2005; Schoenborn 2011). Competition from larger retailers, their diversification, and their expansion into new markets, has been repeatedly cited as a challenge for independent businesses and a threat to the diversity of high streets (Portas 2011). Of particular concern in the policy documents – and to ad hoc shops – is the recent opening of smaller format stores by larger chain supermarkets in urban areas. The appearance of Tesco Express, Little Waitrose, and Sainsbury's Local in my neighbourhood are part of this trend. These developments were inadvertently encouraged by the government via Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) (DCLG, 2005). In trying to limit out-of-town growth that threatened smaller urban retailers, the policy did the reverse (Sadun 2008). Through market analysis, agility, and legal finagling, these big-box stores have been able to adapt their larger format shops to more fine-grained urban locations and gained market share in the process (see Hall 2011; Wrigley et al. 2009). This economic portrait was an insistent refrain amongst the shop-keepers.

> Mo tells me that street trading is a dying trade. Tesco will sell 5 bananas for £1, the kiosks sell them for 30p each. They cannot compete with the chains.
>
> — Field notes, 7 November 2012

> "How's business?" I ask Narinder. "They'll all close" he tells me, referring to independent corner shops. "It's the Tescos that are killing them," he says. It's also the rent. It's a large shop, but he pays £130,000 per annum in rent and about £60,000 per annum to the Council in tax. The profit margins are just too small. It doesn't add up.
>
> — Field notes, 18 June 2012

> Even with all the residential buildings around, he has never sold a litre of milk to a resident. They don't come to the corner shop. They go to the Tesco instead. He is thankful for the business workers and tourists.
>
> — Field notes, 12 July 2012

Government policy has had other adverse effects. As well as encouraging large retailers to enter the convenience shop market through PPS6, changes to the Shops Act further privileged supermarket chains to the detriment of corner shops (see Barrett et al. 2001; Hall 2011; Ram & Jones 2008). Whereas corner shops were once an exception to the Sunday Trading Act, the change leveled the field. The effect of lifted limits of shop opening hours for all has been described by Barrett and colleagues (2001) as catastrophic to South Asian-owned businesses in particular.

These policy changes challenged an already fragile position of these shops. A study executed by Verdict (2011) on UK Convenience Food Retailing (see BIS 2011) suggests the independent convenience market has stagnated and predicts that independent shops will dwindle – from 29.1% of the total convenience food market in 2005 to 15.7% in 2014 – as multiples diversify in format and increase their market share (see also Schoenborn 2011). Though statistical evidence and erosion on the high street seem convincing, other research has cast some doubt on assumptions that large supermarket openings negatively impact small shops. The Competition Commission's study, released in 2008, for example, found that, in some cases, large retailers have mostly positive impacts on the longevity and entry of small shops. It concluded that competition was good for consumers, and that convenience stores provide complementary retail to larger stores. Most notably for this project, their findings indicated that while supermarket openings had a negative impact on off-licences, they were positively associated with independent convenience stores and confectioners/tobacconists/newsagents. Wrigley et al.'s (2009) more geographically nuanced study arrived at similar results. Importantly, they emphasise that the relationship between the opening of larger chains and entry and exit rates of small shops is not causal, but an association, attributable perhaps to urban buzz, to linked trips as consumers visit larger stores, or to the possibility that an increase in population growth, income and demand might simultaneously spur both supermarkets and entry of some independent shops (Wrigley et al. 2009).

The results of the Competition Commission's study have been disputed, criticised for its methods of data collection and analysis (see Guy 2008). A market analysis is well beyond the scope of this project, but a useful synthesis and evaluation of the competing claims is made by BIS (2011), which states that the evidence linking larger retailers to the closure of independents is plausible but inconclusive. The entry and exit rates measured by the studies above are one way to understand the precarity of the small shops sector. But these statistics tell us little about the experience of lives lived. A statistic – a shop open or closed / a one or zero on a spreadsheet – cannot account for the skill and feeling of trying to keep a shop in business and make a livelihood. It cannot measure the stress on a rubber band used to support a shelf in lieu of costly brackets. It also fails to recount the journeys and pressures on individual shopkeepers.

Attending to the translocal & the hyper-precarious shop

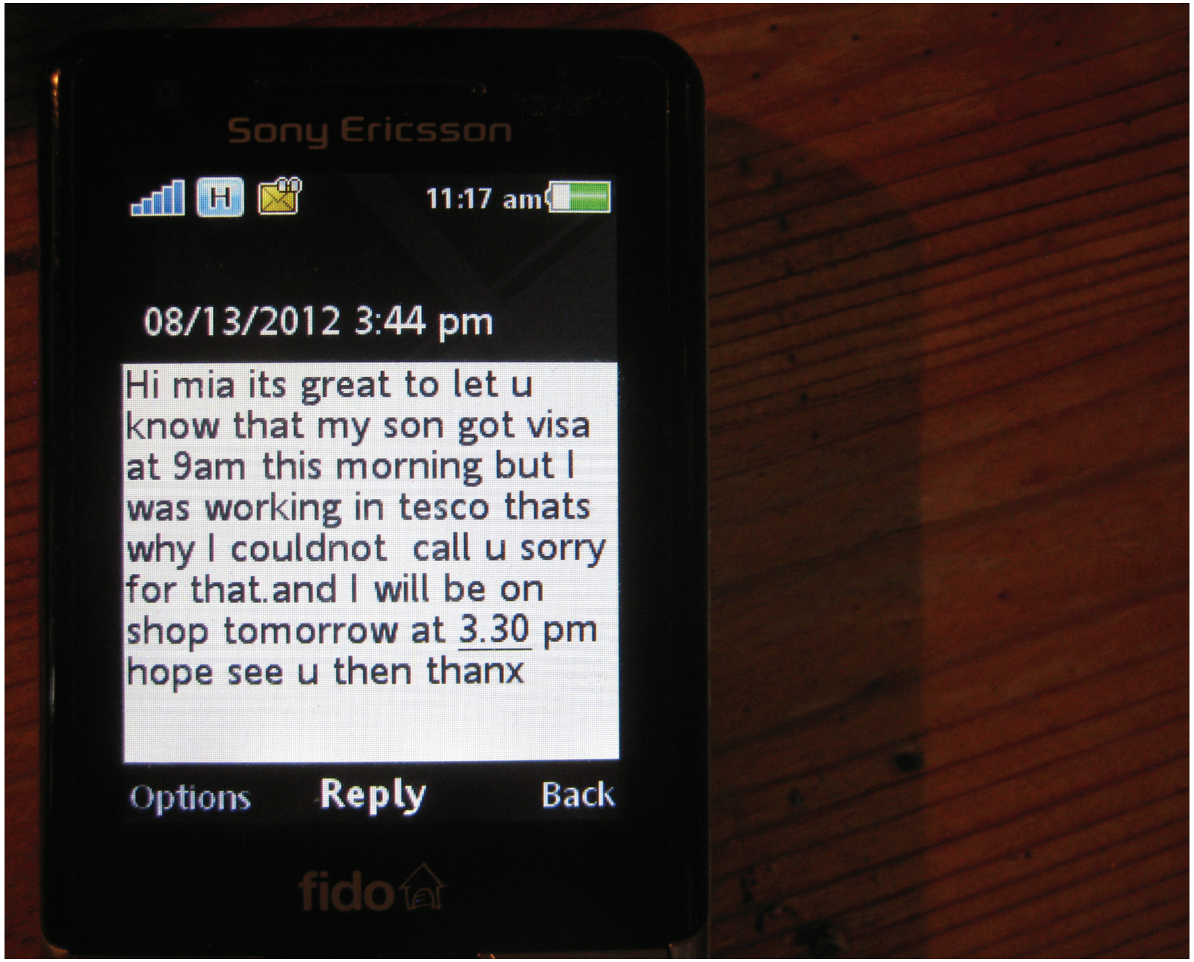
Heightened by changes in public policy and by a changing competitive retail landscape, precarity of the shops also crops up in relation to the subjective experiences of the shopkeepers. It is well-known that these sorts of shops are kept by shopkeepers with transnational identities. Not all shopkeepers in my neighbourhood are from elsewhere, though around 84% of proprietors are born outside of the UK. I understand this to be fairly typical. Shops in the neighbourhood measure up with statistics from the Association of Convenience Stores' (ACS 2014) Local Shops Report, which observes that 82% of independent retailers in London are of Asian descent.

Throughout the project, the multiple geographies and translocal identities of the shops kept bubbling up. By way of the curators and things in the shop, the geographies of these places extend well beyond the neighbourhood and the UK. As I will discuss, shopkeepers feel various attachments to place, both through on-going makings of ethnicity and experiences of re/trans-location. While, as elaborated below, it was unclear if their attachments elsewhere impacted the style of shop curation, these attachments are important to most of the shopkeepers I worked with in a number of other ways. First, the international connections they maintain are important parts of the shopkeepers' fluid and multiple identities (see Appadurai 1996). Second, places further afield were present in the shops – materially, in our conversations, and in the attachments of the shopkeepers. Third, though translocal connections provided a sense of being in the world, they also suffused everyday life with a sense of volatility. Migration is pervaded with precarity. Lewis and others (2014) have used "hyper-precarity" to describe the experience of migrant workers coming to the Global North, where all facets of their lives and movement are characterised by an inescapable state of precarity (see also Waite 2009). Shopkeepers may be held in perpetual states of transience, which have the potential for alienation (Standing 2009).

Daleel's son was born two months ago in Bangladesh. He hasn't seen him yet, except on Skype. Daleel recently learned that his baby has a heart problem, which makes the distance feel enormous. The baby will likely undergo surgery in the next few months. "Pray for him," he implores. Daleel wells up just a bit as he tells me about the challenges getting a Visa for the baby. He hopes to bring his wife and son here soon, but it's not easy. He is a student, but because he's not studying at the Master's level, it is not guaranteed. When he applied for his own Visa, he was originally rejected. The Border Agency said he didn't have enough money in his account, which was incorrect. He hired a lawyer to reapply. The UKBA changed their decision, but this took a second application with a second fee. He managed to secure a Visa for his wife and she was in London for a year or so, but left for the birth of their child. It was a bad time for Daleel – he was in the middle of exams and knew he couldn't give her the support she needed. And she has her family there, of course. And his. The application for the baby will be submitted in the next week or so. Our fingers are crossed.

— Field notes, 17 July 2012

The shops have stories to tell. And as outlined in Chapter Three, I tread carefully here to avoid placing undue focus on the ethnic backgrounds of the curators. In relation to literature on ethnic minority businesses, I try to avoid long-standing ethnic resources models or ethnocultural approaches which attribute characteristics of "ethnic" businesses – and their varied levels of success – to cultural traits. Some authors, for example, articulate and venerate shared cultural identity, and traditional values like self-sacrifice and industriousness in business practice (see for example Light & Bonacich 1988; Waldinger 1990). As Ram and Jones (2008) note, focusing on the ethnicity of entrepreneurs has the effect of wrongly attributing aspects of shop life to their ethnic background. Some shopkeepers keep long hours, not because they are Asian, but because this is the demand of the job. To avoid ethnic exceptionalism, academics like Ram and Jones alternatively employ Kloosterman et al.'s (1999) mixed-embeddedness model to study ethnic minority businesses, a model which begins with the businesses' social and economic contexts. For Ram and Jones (2008) the practices and situations of ethnic minority business are just versions of universal themes for small and medium enterprises. This accommodates the multiple identities of the shopkeepers (Guanaratnam 2003). For these authors, the high predominance of Asian-ownership in corner shops does not relate to ethnicity, but to an experience of being new. As such, self-employment tends to decrease among groups with longer histories in the UK (Ram & Jones 2008). But as labour market outsiders, newer migrants find self-employment necessary to counter exclusion.



08/13/2012 3:44 pm

Hi mia its great to let u
know that my son got visa
at 9am this morning but I
was working in tesco thats
why I couldnot call u sorry
for that.and I will be on
shop tomorrow at 3.30 pm
hope see u then thanx

As noted previously, precarity is not due to subjectivities, but situations of time and place. Furthermore, migrants do not keep shop because of a natural culturally-instilled propensity, but because of the low barriers to entry. Though it has been described in more optimistic terms by some academics (see for example

Gidoomal 1997; Janjuha-Jivraj 2003) and by the government (APPSSG 2006), self-employment among ethnic minorities is a necessity rather than a choice. As such, a rise in self-employment is not an indication of advancement but a "working class accommodation to the ravages of a neo-liberal modernity" (Virdee 2006: 609-610). This is often undesirable work. Some stories I observed rang true with Ram and Jones' (2008: 360) findings "that many Asian small-business owners are stuck in highly competitive and precarious market niches (notably, lower-order retailing); are undercapitalised; work long hours, intensively utilising family and coethnic labour and are struggling to survive in hostile inner-city environments." This precarity is felt in the shop.

"Without cheap labour there would be chaos in the country," Daleel proclaims. "These shops need workers," he continues. "They cannot afford to pay minimum wage to English people." Daleel says he should have made £40 yesterday, for 10.5 hours. At a minimum wage of £6.60, the shop would have paid out almost £70 for that shift. It wouldn't be sustainable. The sales and margins are just too low. They buy from big retailers and try to compete with Tesco on prices. If minimum wage was paid they would need to increase the prices. Then people will shop elsewhere, Daleel reasons… probably even more at the Tesco. "It's the same at restaurants. If minimum wages were paid, food prices would go up and the economy would be affected. Businesses would close and there would be more unemployment. Fewer immigrants means shops will close. But they're more relaxed, so lower pay is okay," he tells me. He is "passing time easily". He can close for half an hour and walk about if he wants. "But minimum wage is what you need to survive," I say. He says he can survive like this.

— Field notes, 7 August 2012

Daleel feels he's inherited a strong business sense – an asset in the kiosk. His family is in business: textile manufacturing and hardware retail. In Bangladesh, kiosks are perceived in the same light as London, he tells me. For this, his family chides him. "It's not a real business, they say." The small groceries or corner shops in Bangladesh are called tong shops. They are similar to kiosks in London, but have fridges and other products behind the counter, so the shopkeeper has to fetch them. People might go to the shops to buy one cigarette at a time or a cold drink. Where he's from, many people don't have fridges in their homes. Back in Bangladesh he would have a job and a car and a nice flat. But he likes reality, he says, not fine things. "The simple life." At home he would never work in a kiosk, but for the family business instead.

It's very hard for shopkeepers in Bangladesh. It's hard for shopkeepers in London too. The economic constraints of the kiosk secure its low status in the retail hierarchy, here and there, he tells me. "It's small time." Our kiosk in particular is a "rubbish shop", albeit in a good location. Why so rubbish? "Probably because there are so many shops here. If you could manage three or four shops like this, you could make some money," Daleel believes. You would need to implement a system so you could trust employees. Corruption makes a difficult business even harder. CCTV is the best way, he figures. With multiple shops, he could earn £4,000-5,000 per month, but it would require an investment of around £50,000 to do it right. This kiosk started with almost nothing.

— Field notes, 8 August 2012

Besides the direct financial challenges, some shopkeepers face other constraints related to their newness. Shopkeepers' stories capture the sense of hyper-precarity in relation to language and literacy, awareness of the law and regulatory frameworks (see also Hall 2011), immigration status, and the transferability of skills amassed elsewhere.

I go inside and take my spot behind the cash. I'm ringing in all the purchases now, but there aren't so many. The first person to come to the kiosk who isn't asking for directions, is a portly man in a white polo shirt with a Camden logo on the breast. "Where is the owner", he asks and flips open his wallet to display a Council identity card. "He's not here," Daleel tells him. "When will he be back?" the officer asks. "Maybe later," Daleel says elusively. The official says he'll be back in an hour or so, but Daleel isn't worried. "I'll have closed the shop up by then," he tells me. Daleel has to go to the mosque and pray, necessary but also convenient to dodge the Camden official. "What's it all about?" I ask. "Well, we don't have a right license for the goods," he says casually. "The license is still for mobile phones and repairs, but the owner said it was okay."

— Field notes, 27 July 2012

I'm on the bus with Mo, heading to the cluster of street traders by the Holborn tube. Today he'll try to sign them up to the traders' association. We pass SS News on the way. I tell Mo that the shop may close, but that perhaps the owner will rent to someone else. He looks uneasy and tells me we don't want to get into people's private business. I later understand what he means: it is against the law for an owner to rent a kiosk to someone else. Mentioning this was taboo. I am surely not the only one who doesn't know this. It seems to me that Daleel may not be aware.

— Field notes, 22 October 2012

This morning I read the street trading regulations before arriving at the kiosk. They make me feel a bit queasy and I bring them up when I see Daleel. He tells me that a woman from the Council was by this morning taking photos of the kiosk. She reminded him that he does not have a license to sell these goods. I tell him what I read this morning…about how the Council could confiscate his products. He is shaken. He lets his brother address the owner, but will prompt him to do so again.

— Field notes, 30 August 2012

Daleel is gearing up to go back to his studies. He has been in London for five years now and enrolled in a number of programmes. When he first arrived he studied at a "rubbish college," which seemed legitimate before he came. It's hard to know from back home, he explains. He transferred to a second college, which was rubbish as well, and got a diploma in management over two years. It has since closed. After two years struggling with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants certification, which "was bad luck with me", he has now been at Coventry University for one year, working on his BA in innovative business.

— Field notes, 7 August 2012

"When I said it was Coventry University, it was really with the British Institute of Technology and E-commerce (BITE)," Daleel explains. In an email this morning he learned that the partnership between BITE and Coventry has ended. He could stay with Coventry, but this would mean reapplying for his visa, which may jeopardise the visas of his wife and son. If he stays with BITE he will have to change programmes and will ultimately receive a diploma – "another rubbish diploma from a rubbish college." Daleel sighs. Both routes are risky. He will meet with BITE on Tuesday and see what can be done.

— Field notes, 23 August 2012

Today, Daleel tells me he'll stay at BITE and not shift to Coventry University. I know it's because he's scared of the visa process, of the UKBA. BITE has promised they will partner with another university soon, but cannot disclose the details. We talk about Metropolitan University, which is in the process of getting its license pulled. It's a challenging time to be an international student in London.

— Field notes, 24 August 2012

We talk about the future… about where this job might lead. Daleel talks about opening a cash-and-carry, about being a wholesaler to shops like his. He sees the kiosk as a learning stage for his business skills: a platform to understand how to manage another kind of business. It's about managing and knowing people – employees, customers, drivers, suppliers… everyone who is related to the business. It's also about being frugal… finding the best deals and cutting costs. He acknowledges that he needs more business skills too, especially as they relate to finance. The learning is endless. He needs to work on communication skills, motivation skills, marketing, financing, HR… his university programme is helping him with some of this. He tells me he needs to improve his English… writing, speaking, and reading. This will open all sorts of doors.

— Field notes, 6 August 2012

Via text, Daleel's brother Usman asks to speak with me. "Something about the project," Daleel imagines. [...] Usman is planning a career move – in marketing – and asks if I would edit his CV and cover letter. I do, with pleasure, but my heart drops during the task. He has a Master's degree from Bangladesh, but his English skills are wanting. In addition, he has only service work in London – at Tesco, the Tie Rack, and Krispy Kreme – to showcase his strengths. I turn the documents into polished pieces of work, but wonder how he will make this leap. A job that involves any writing would be challenging, but would he even get that chance? I know he's qualified for this, but it seems lost in translation.

— Field notes, 16 August 2012

I join Mo at a back table of the Pret a Manger. He is anxious to send the letter I drafted for the Council and TfL. When we met last week, Mo told me what to write in reply to their demands to move his kiosk to a new, less desirable, location. I give him a copy of the letter and he scans it quickly. "This is great," he says. He pauses and sips his tea. "Could you read it to me?" he asks. I realise then, he may be illiterate. I know now why he didn't want to do this over email and why he wants me to write these letters in the first place. His disregard for some of the trading regulations – for advertising on his stall, for example – also makes more sense in light of his literacy issues. I can only imagine the Council and TfL's surprise when they get my erudite letter signed by him.

— Field notes, 14 July 2012

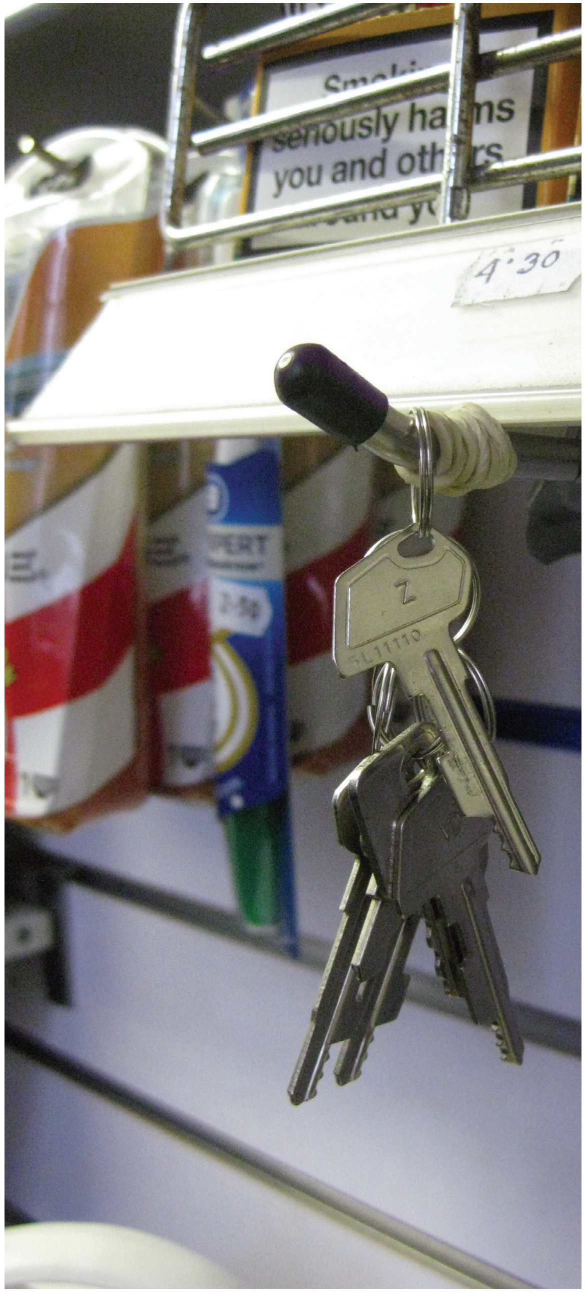
Precarity, design & practice

The economic precarity of some shopkeepers is palpable in the material and curation of the shop. Design and practices are a response to economic constraints and minimise investment needed in the business. The stress on materials and ad hoc-ness of display, detailed in Chapter Five, are a result of financial burden. The elastic band buttressing the shelf of cigarettes, the tape pressed over the crack on the plastic bowl, the back of the flyer used to make a poster for a new offer: the ad hoc use of materials avoids costly factory-made solutions. Instead, much is done with what's around. This makes financial sense, but also shifts the affective register of keeping shop.

Daleel fantasises about a dream kiosk, but redesigning it would cost about £4,500. It's a very uncertain investment, he tells me. Would people buy more gum if the kiosk was redesigned? Daleel isn't so sure. A proper cigarette display case alone – one with springs that push the cigarettes forward – would cost about £1,000. It costs £2,000 to fill the whole rack with cigarettes. He doesn't have money to buy more than a few cartons today. If there are no cigarettes, the display will never look good.

It's the same for all products; without stock, the shelves look bare. And without proper display shelves, meagre stock looks even sadder. It's not just how it looks, but how it feels. Hardship sucks the joy out of shopkeeping. Daleel likes organising the chewing gum, but wishes it wasn't in boxes, but on proper shelves. "Bigger shops have proper shelves," Daleel says enviously. Restocking the drinks cooler is also a pain because the wire shelves inside cause drinks to slip this way and that. The right tools would make the job more enjoyable, and encourage him and his employees to restock. "If you have the right tools you feel comfort and you can create an image for your shop". Daleel looks at the chocolate racks – the varying depths, the cardboard boxes, the duct tape. "This is not looking good," he admits. "It's not professional". If there are no goods, there is no point in decorating, but the shelves reveal a business under financial strain.

— Field notes, 6 August 2012

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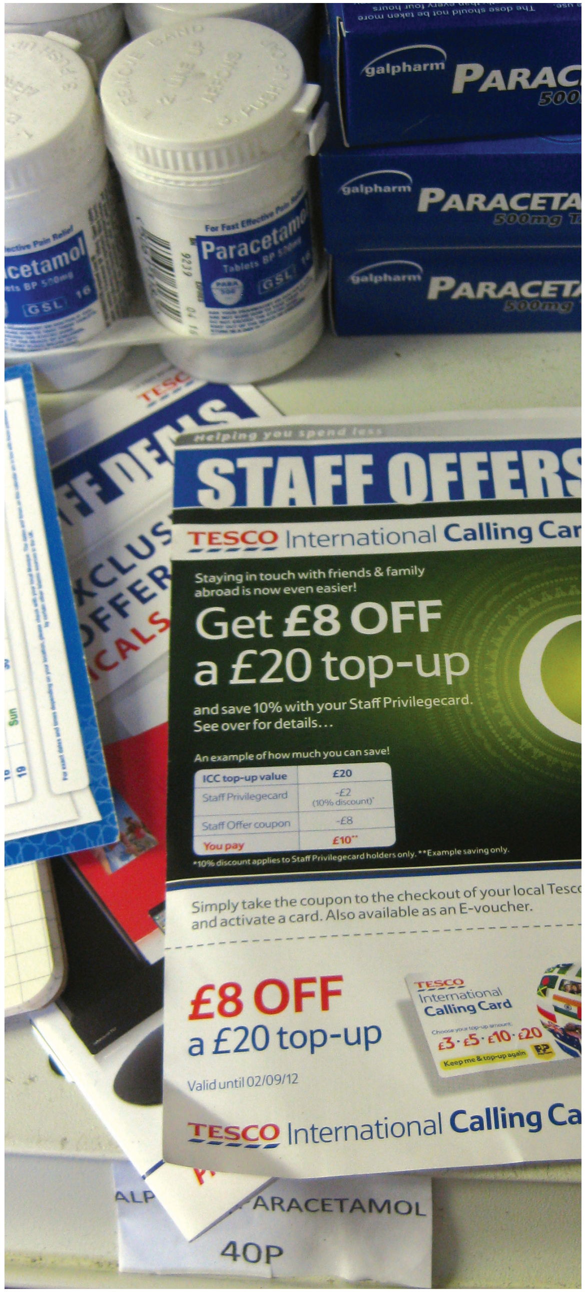
MoneyGram
Send and receive money worldwide
Coffee TO GO
Coffee TO GO

As well as creatively reusing and adapting materials, some business owners share space to relieve the financial burdens associated with setting up shop. As described in Chapter Four, many corner shops hire the forecourt to other businesses, especially produce vendors. This serves to animate the shop and provides complementary retail activity. Additionally, and most importantly for the shop owner, it generates income. Two corner shops in the neighbourhood take this further, carving up interior space to hire out to other entrepreneurs. These arrangements help individuals start businesses, distribute rent, and keep the site of business diverse through complementary retail and services.

My visa is due to expire. I tuck Rowan in the sling, and my UKBA paperwork into a folder, and go up to the King's Cross Post Office. A post office, yes, but more than that. We enter through the doors flanked, on one side, by a neat pyramid of plastic bowls displaying produce and, on the other, by some metal chairs and tables connected to the café and takeaway counter inside. I smell the café's full English fry-up offer as we pass by a wall of souvenirs and a counter selling mobile accessories and unlocking services. We continue past a row of computers – an "internet café" – to the photo booth at the back. As I fumble with the buttons and height of the stool in the booth, I can hear a man giving legal advice to a young couple at a small desk just outside the curtain. Finally with my visa photos in hand, I realise I forgot my scissors, and ask to borrow some from the stationery counter. The shopkeeper coos at Rowan as I cut up my photos and look over my paperwork. The queue at the post office counter is short, which is a blessing. It is hot in the shop. With the application in the post, I celebrate with a cool ginger beer which I buy from the convenience shop at the front. It seems like this one-stop shop has something for everyone. Today, it is the ideal outfitter for a migrant like me. — Field notes, 5 January 2014

Similar practices are found in other London neighbourhoods and have been described by Hall (2011, 2012, 2013) along Walworth Road. Like me, she found that compartmentalising space in this way helps minimise risk and encourages other entrepreneurs, who can get relatively inexpensive space to run their business. Commenting on the particular material and social qualities of these configurations, Hall (2013: 11) writes that "certainly the long, hybrid shop interiors have a bazaar-like quality that exhibits a mix of economic dexterity, opportunism and a litmus-like response to the multi-ethnic, less affluent urban population that it serves, with affinities for highly sociable modes of trade." Here, material, social, and economic imperatives are folded together.

Shopkeeping is a way of getting by. For many it is also a way of life. Frugality is part of life and the shop; it brings the two together. There are some paradoxes in how this plays out, as highlighted here in the ambivalent relations between Daleel, the kiosk, and Tesco. To get by, "every little helps."



Mia: "What's your dream job, Daleel? If you could do anything, what would it be?"

Daleel: "To be in the business administration at Tesco. Then I will be proud."

— Field notes, 19 June 2012

For Daleel, this is a part-time gig. At the stall, he's really just helping out his brother. Putting it like this makes him feel better, considering he doesn't get paid for his time here. After his eight hour shift at the kiosk, he will go straight to the Tesco. He is wearing his polyester work trousers. He never wears shoes in the kiosk, but his Tesco safety shoes are here too, pushed up against a flat of Coke cans.

He's been at the Tesco for four years, working as many hours as his student visa will allow: 20/week during term time. He made £6.25/hour to start and makes £7.25 now. Every year his pay goes up, but there's no way to advance while he's a student. Someday, he hopes to move to team leader, then to shift manager, to duty manager, to store manager, to operations manager, to area manager...! He laughs with amused delight.

At Tesco he restocks, unloads lorries, counts the stock, and works the till. He tries to bring a personal touch to his work. To get a laugh, he announces, "Please go... to cashier five", emulating the automated voice. He tries to give people a break. Sometimes he'll replace a frozen treat that a child drops even after he's paid, contravening company policy. He likes the work and his co-workers. "Lots of people from my country," he tells me. In the kiosk, he employs some of the Tesco strategies: rotating stock to avoid shrinkage and separating different types of products, for example. (Never put chocolate with jelly candies. Never put consumables in a bag with household items. Never put two similar products together that are very close in colour: the red Skittles should sit between the blue and green.) But the greatest impact on the kiosk of his employment has probably been his employee discount. When he can't get to the cash-and-carry to stock up, Daleel buys from Tesco. It's not ideal. On gum for example, a Tesco product resold in the kiosk means a 10% profit, whereas the same purchase at the cash-and-carry means a 30% profit. But getting to the cash-and-carry might require closing the shop. As Daleel says, "sometimes, it's not a good business". His margins are low as it is – much smaller than the Tesco's, which buys directly from suppliers. For instance, Tesco buys a bottle of Highland Springs water direct for 20p per unit and sells for 53p. The cash-and-carry sells the same bottle to Daleel for 30p, who sells it for 52p, in an effort to compete with his employer. His discount is good, but yesterday he had to increase the prices of the crisps by 2p after stocking up at work. Other times, the Tesco purchases are excellent. On top of the crisps, last night he also bought some Red Bull for the shop. At 4 for £2.70 and with a £1 coupon, he bought them for £0.43 each and is selling them for £1.20. "It's a good business." There's great irony in that this global chain both keeps them open and pressures them to close.

— Field notes, 8 August 2012

Daleel: "I'll be back soon"

Mia: "Sure. Where are you going?"

Daleel: "To the Tesco 'round the corner. I need to top up."

Mia: "But we sell mobile top-ups here."

Daleel: "I know. But with my discount, it will be 50p cheaper at the Tesco. And I get my points too. It's more savings."

— Field notes, 8 August 2012

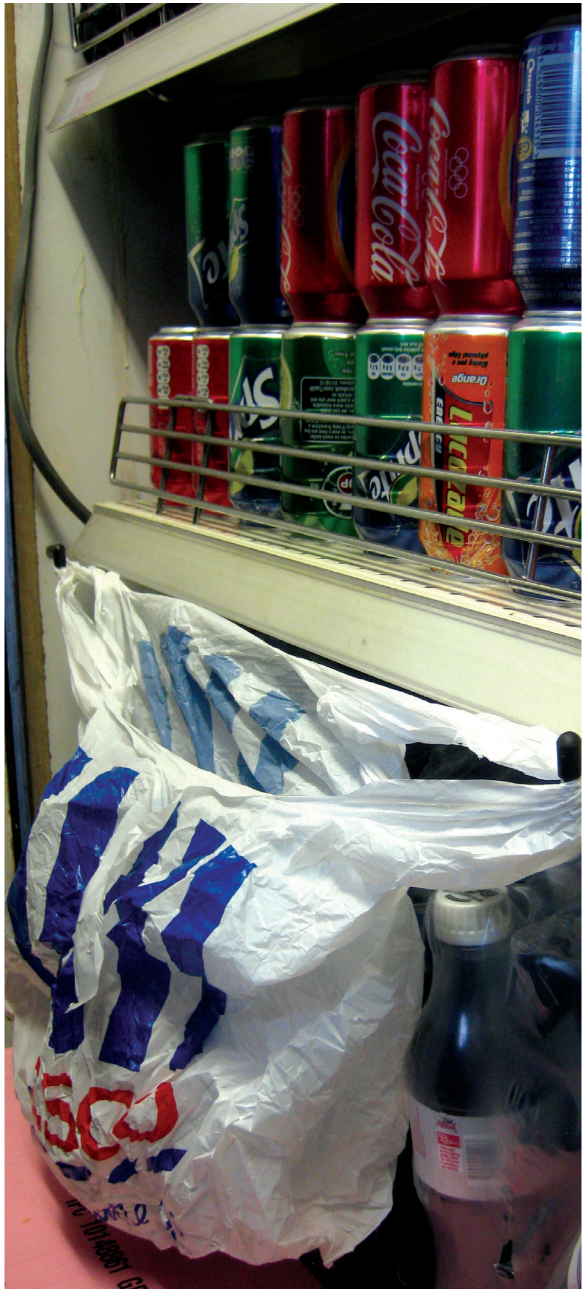
He survives in the same way that the kiosk survives. Both rely on deals; both calculate to the penny. "This shirt" – pointing to his hoodie – "I bought at Tesco. It was £6, but with my discount, I paid £5.40. These jeans, £8, but £7.20 for me. These socks" – he pulls up his jeans and lifts his foot – "5 pairs for £3. And they're nice socks," he says. The shoes: £4, but £3.60 with his discount. His flip flops were £1.50, £1.35 with his discount. He knows the price of everything. Does he ever buy anything from another store? Once he bought a jacket from Peacock, he admits. His friend gave him a coupon, so the £25 jacket was £12.50.

When he moved into his current place, by the Olympic Park, he bought a deep freezer from Tesco which he keeps in his room. When offers arise, he buys in bulk – vegetables, meat, prawns. He is too busy to shop all the time and thrives on the deal. Yesterday, he bought two baby Halal chickens. If he had more space in the freezer he would have bought more. "That's how I'm surviving," he says, "I convert to Club Card and use coupons and my discount."

— Field notes, 16 August 2012

Daleel is exhausted. He's had no time to make food, so he snacks on Oreo cookies. He has been working 14 hour shifts at Tesco this week – as much as possible before the term starts again. Through the summer, he averaged about 37 hours per week at Tesco, 80 hours per week with both jobs combined. Pay day is tomorrow. He's excited to see the rewards. We talk about the Tesco deals he plans to enjoy with his pay cheque. Does he ever do anything extravagant with his money – buy something expensive just because he likes it? Never, he says flatly. If he finds something of good quality and value, he may spend money on something non-essential to send back home. "Without any reason, I don't buy it" he tells me. "But even if I don't need it, or my family doesn't need it, I will buy because of good value." (Is that a different kind of extravagance? I wonder.) He talks about making up his room once his roommates move out. Once he shifts to the bigger space, he'll paint and use a scented candle he bought from Tesco. At first this does sounds indulgent. "A very nice offer – I bought it for two pounds," he says proudly. He purchased it for his Mom's or brother's room, and asked his friend to take it back home. At about 400-500 grams, his friend told him it was too heavy. So now he will enjoy it. It smells like sweet flowers, he tells me.

— Field notes, 30 August 2012

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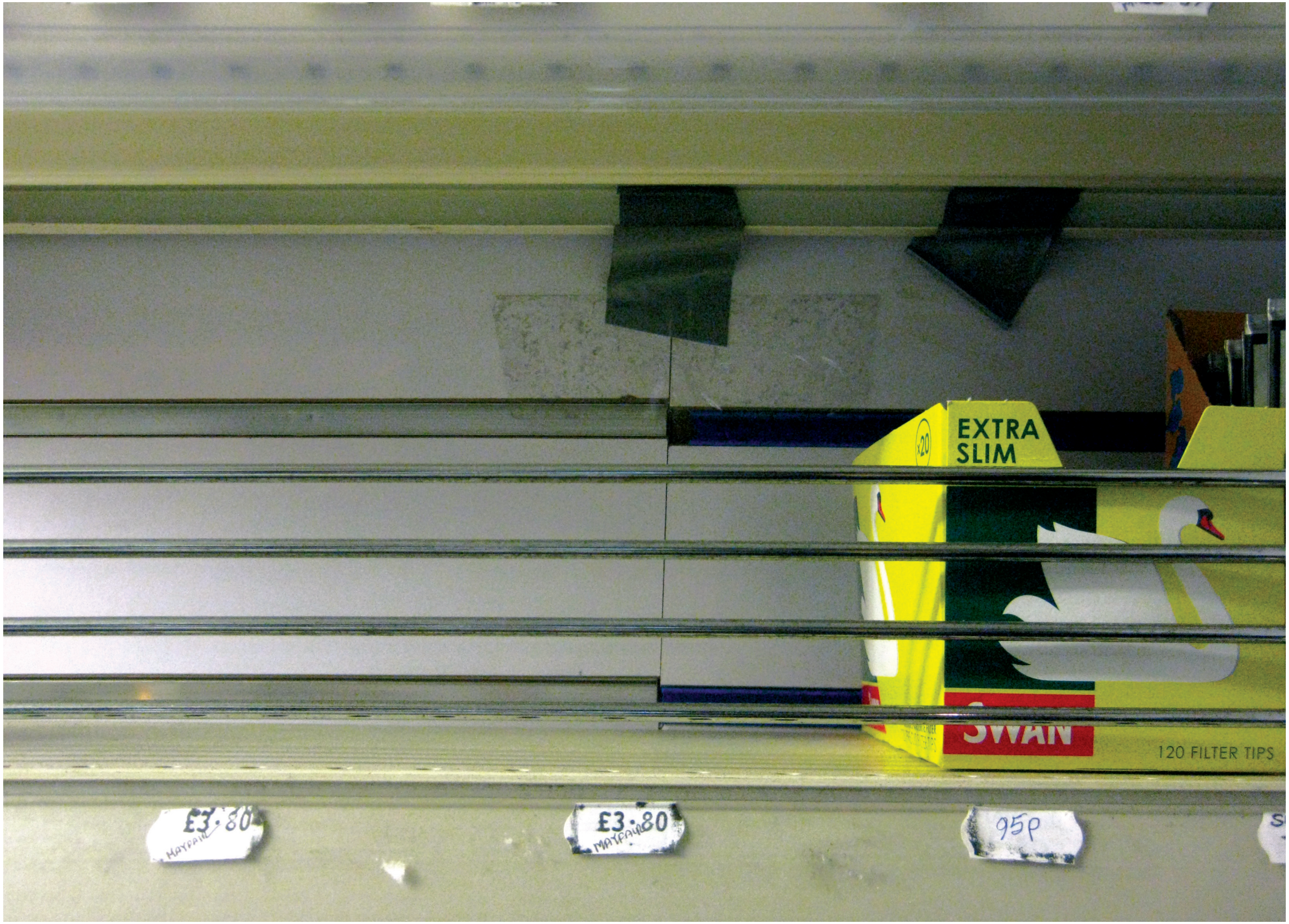
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Tonight SS News is closing its shutters for good. Under the fluorescent lights, we pack the stock into Tesco carrier bags and black bin liners. There's little strategy for this disassembly. Our fingers are black with the dust that collected over the summer. It is strange handling every product in the store: The candy bars that melted in the heat wave, Chew-its which collected so much dust in their folded ends, packs of envelopes which never sold. Within a couple hours the entire contents are bagged up. Although it could have been a sober day, the closure signals a great relief for Daleel and Usman. The shop was volatile and ultimately a costly distraction from their other jobs: at Tesco and The Tie Rack… maybe it was just too ad hoc.

— Field notes, 31 October 2012

Translocality

I want to return to ideas of the multiple geographies of the shops and shopkeepers, but this time with a different inflection. As outlined on the preceding pages, the translocality of the shop brings some precarity to the lives of the shopkeepers. It also evokes notions of difference, which is wrapped up in another, but interrelated, set of concerns and possibilities. Ad hoc shops are sites where global things and bodies commingle. Life here and away is connected to, and through, the shop, and both materials and practices are shaped by global imaginations.

Topological surfaces & translocal spaces

The notion of translocality draws on wider topological approaches. Topology is also useful to explore the ways in which the shops fold time and space. Following Deleuze, topological approaches to the city see urban space in perpetual states of movement and folding. Cities are "a topology of intensities and relations" (Smith 2003: 574). Stories, time, and space are gathered, turning and twisting in relation to each other. For Amin (2007: 103), the topologic is "a subtle folding together of the distant and the proximate, the virtual and the material, presence and absence, flow and stasis." Smith's (2003: 571) relational approach to urban geography, too, sees the city as a "topology of circulation and network folding" and challenges us to reconsider how we approach distance, linearity, and scale. This urban origami evokes a complexity of texture and potential. It can be used as a device to understand not only the way stuff works through the shop, but also the complex geographies and relationships of the curators.

The fluid relationships – between places and through time – move and layer in the shop. This complexity befits the material of the shop and the shopkeepers' multiple attachments of translocation. It locates shopkeeping as a translocal/transnational practice, chiming with Massey's (1994) conceptions of space where multiple places and times are collapsed and practiced at once. The varied loyalties to place are manifested in the work of keeping shop (see also Hall & Datta 2010); other places become part of the local, materially and imaginatively. The term "translocal" is used to describe migrants' everyday, meaningful, dispersed connections. Here, distant places are significant, but grounded in local power relations, textures of place, and affectual relationships (Brickell & Datta 2011). This suggests attachment to place, not in a bounded way, but in a dynamic sense that allows a local expression and exploration of translocal, transnational, and diasporic identities (Hall & Datta 2010: 70). In this way, shopkeeping is a sort of translocal homebuilding that tries to create comfort – materially and affectively – in the current time and place (Hage 1997: 102).

The canopy is broken at the kiosk, but the giant plane tree overhead protects us to some degree in the downpour. This doesn't stop Daleel putting on his shoes and dashing out from time to time with a rag to wipe the rain drops from the candy bar and crisp packages. "I love the smell of rain on hot pavement," I tell him. "It reminds me of recess periods in elementary school in Canada. I'm suddenly in grade three, skipping rope on break from Mrs Thomlinson's class." Daleel smiles knowingly. It's the sound of rain on corrugated metal roofs that moves him, he tells me. Shops in Bangladesh use this sort of material – make this sort of music. Typical of London, a bright sun bursts through after the rain. In Bangladesh, there's an expression for this: fox mother getting married. Daleel laughs as he hears these words leave his lips. He beams across the wet pavement dappled with light shining through the plane tree above.

—Field notes, 16 August 2012

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TOWER BRIDGE
LONDON

The materials in the shops are part of the assemblages encompassing here and now, there and then. As discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the museum, objects can shift the topologies of space by connecting to other spaces and times (Hetherington 1997). In the shop, materials are woven into the fabric and economies of the shop, and into the lives of the shopkeepers as well. Branded objects, like the Lycamobile Ramadan schedule mentioned in Chapter Six, may become technologies of international connection and personal relations. Cheap international calls in particular have compressed time and space in new ways (see Kivisto 2001; Vertovec 2004; Zhou 2004). Because they fold together dispersed attachments and experience, the shopkeepers' personal relationships with these technologies may shape how they interact with the brands.

Daleel pushes Lycamobile only in part because of the free vouchers and swag – the shopping bags, the Oyster card holders, the Ramadan cards.... It's the cheapest, which is why he uses it too. Once an O2 customer, he switched to Lebara and now to Lycamobile, because it offers him calls to Bangladesh for 1p/minute (9p a minute cheaper than what he pays to call local London mobiles).

These SIM phones have been essential to connect him with his country, he tells me. Without the calling cards he would call less. He would have to buy calling cards and would be restricted to using a land line. He imagines bills closer to £50/month than the £15 he pays now. With all his coupons, it's cheap to use calling cards at home, but he's always out – always at work. Skype is difficult, because you need a good connection on both ends and internet is expensive and patchy in Bangladesh. Without a cheap SIM card plan, his freedom to connect with his family would be limited. "And what would [my family] think of me? They would have negative thoughts about me. If I don't call they would think I have a problem. That I don't have money maybe... maybe I have another girl!" He laughs. "And I'll be upset. I'll miss them. I'll be jealous that [other] people can call [their own families]. I'll say [to] myself, my earning is less".

His relationships have developed and been maintained via SIM. He calls his sisters, his mother, and his brothers to hear the news. His life skills also developed through the use of SIM mobile technology. When he arrived in London alone, he didn't have any cooking abilities. He used to call his Mom from his kitchen with his ear piece in, and she would walk him through a recipe. "Now cut the onion..." she would say. Some people have the "fame of hand" – the knack. He's been told he cooks better than his mother now.

Unbeknownst to their parents, Daleel and his fiancée had illicit long-distance phone contact – between London and Bangladesh – for a year before they finally met on their wedding day. They now have a son, whom Daleel looks forward to meeting for the first time this autumn. His wife called him at noon today, just so Daleel could hear his baby laugh. He had never laughed like this. "If you have far connections, phone is the only way to get them," Daleel says.

— Field notes, 1 August 2012

When Daleel returns he wants to show me pictures on his laptop. We click through photos of his baby and his wedding and shots of him and his wife at Mme Tussaud's. As we go, Daleel identifies the people in the shots and other important things. "This is my wife's mobile phone!" he exclaims in one shot. Shortly after, the Lycamobile rep passes by. The company still hasn't told him if they will fix the canopy. Daleel is frustrated, but is resigned to let it go. I am beginning to wonder if his affinity for the company is wrapped up in its capacity to help him hear his baby laugh and his wife talk about plans for the future. When he sells customers on the Lyca system, he speaks as a friend. I sense he genuinely wants to extend this intimate sense of connection he has with his own distant relations. He wants other people to experience the ease with which he maintains his own relationships back home.

—Field notes, 22 August 2012

Objects like the Lycamobile Ramadan schedule circulate through the shop with varied geographical attachments. Other objects too are from elsewhere. Some are curated by bodies with attachments to other places and consumed by people who are passing through. These objects move through complex geographical constellations.

The Olympics are over, so we're surprised that people still buy the little flags. A group of Chinese tourists pass by and purchase a few. At £1 each they're a bargain, but they are not particularly well made. The polyester fabric feels gritty between my fingers; the prints bleed on the fabric; and there is nothing to hold the flag at the top of the slippery white plastic stick. Daleel tells me that they were made in China and likely sold by Chinese exporters to importers from Bangladesh. The Bangladesh exporters sold it to British cash-and-carry where he picked them up. Now here we are, selling Chinese flags to Chinese tourists in a Bangladeshi-owned kiosk in Central London.

— Field notes, 16 August 2012

Life and shop intertwine and layer as cultural practices and personal philosophies pervade everyday shopkeeping. On top of this, a sense of precarity demands that these complex subjectivities are negotiated with economics.

When they first opened, Daleel and his co-worker decided not to sell cigarettes. They held out for about three weeks. "We realized we can't make a business without cigarettes," he says. "It was very, very, very complicated. This is not good. It's not allowed. In my religion, we're not allowed to sell." But selling them is essential for customer satisfaction, he says. "You can't do a business on any [one] product. Some will give you more money. Some will give you less. This is how you make a business. If you don't sell cigarettes people won't come. People think of products together," he continues. This is something I've heard from others too: although the mark-up on cigarettes is abysmal, selling them means also selling confectionary and drinks which have higher profit margins. Financial weakness in one section of the shop is buoyed up by another. "People buy gum and cigarettes together." But how complicated indeed to weigh up business with belief.

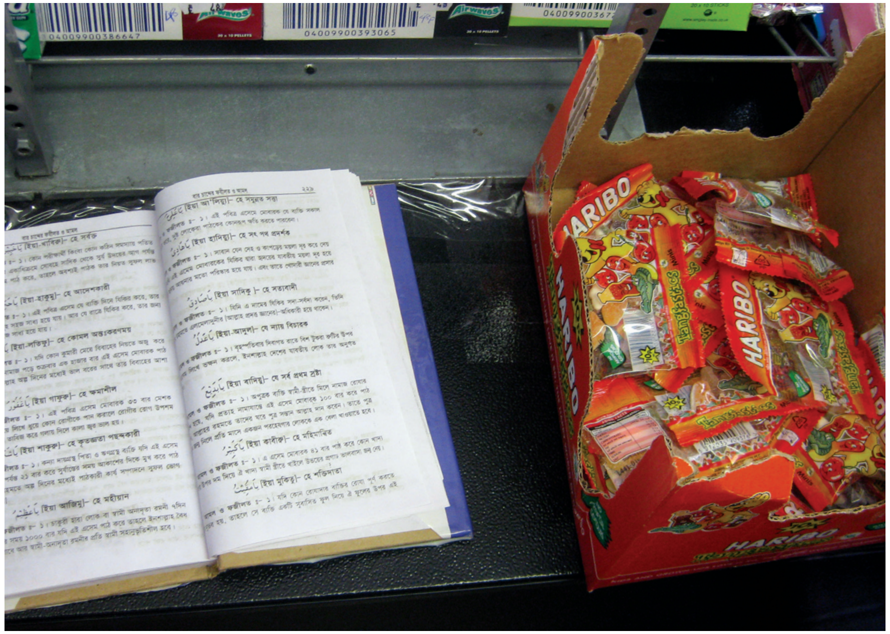
— Field notes, 30 August 2012

In 2012, the month of Ramadan fell within my field study period. Fasting, prayers, discipline, and celebration became central to the experience in some of the shops during this time. For some, belief always guided shopkeeping practices, the material in the shop, and the relationship between co-workers. For others, Ramadan changed their practices: shopkeeping hours shifted and discussions were inflected by feelings of hunger.

It's hot today and Daleel is fasting for Ramadan. He has the lights off in the kiosk when I arrive. I notice other changes too. He has moved the crates of crisps from the counter to the bottom shelf under the cash and moved the sweets to where the crisps were. It creates better air circulation, he tells me. He jokes that he's making changes to distract himself from hunger. Plus he's supposed to be extra good. His prayer book is open on top of the drinks fridge.

He's dismayed that his co-workers continue to steal from the business during this period. He finds wrappers, drink containers and the like. The eating and the stealing… it's a problem, but Daleel won't bring it up. "They'll have to answer to Allah," he says.

— Field notes, 25 July 2012



The issues of precarity, difference, and experience bring us back to how the shops figure in the neighbourhood. How do these issues relate to place? I address two ways here: the shops' place in the neighbourhood and the shops as a place of belonging. The elaboration of these final themes bookends discussions in my first empirical chapter – Chapter Four – about material belonging. In returning to the neighbourhood, I address these matters at a more social register.

Making space for the shop

A thorough consideration of ad hoc shops' presence in the public imagination is beyond the scope of this project. Nonetheless, I was caught up in uneasy moments when comments by local officials signaled disdain for ad hoc shops. Idle talk showed a potential for conflation between the material of the shop and the shopkeeper, stirring political issues of belonging and exclusion in the neighbourhood. Because the multiple identities of the shopkeepers are expressed in the material in the shop, their material politics overlap with identity politics. As described in Chapter Four, particular vitalities of material are judged more valuable than others. It seemed that the supposed aesthetic transgression of these shops was conflated with the identities of their shopkeepers.

But what of the connections between material disorder and elsewhere-ness? Though tracing the aesthetic sensibilities of shops around the globe through time would make for a fascinating project, it was beyond my remit here. I am not aware of such a study, but others have commented on these connections. For example, in her ethnography of Indian groceries in San Francisco's Bay Area, Mankekar (2002) writes about the affective power and semiotic familiarity of the shops' visual clutter. Also, Hall and Datta (2010: 71) write about how the cultural, social, and economic capital of multicultures are evoked in the visual and material expression of the street. While it might be easy to see the shops' materiality as an expression of the ethnic identities of the shopkeeper, the matter in my neighbourhood would not support this as a causal relationship. For example, one kiosk run by generations of Cockney men shares much with the kiosk down the road run by a recent immigrant from Bangladesh. Though their concerns are not material, it is worth rekindling Ram and Jones' (2008) cautions against attributing ethnic essence. As discussed more in Chapter Eight, material ad hoc-ness results not from some sort of ethnic aesthetic sensibility, but from independence, financial challenges, and the absence of design meta-narratives.

Correlation or not, it seems certain types of material are associated with certain bodies. Recall a Camden Street Trading official's suggestion, in Chapter Four, that cupcake kiosks might be more desirable than ones selling pashminas. For me, this evokes an increased occupation of the street, and its retail, by the white middle classes. The exclusion of material may be used as a cypher for the exclusion of certain bodies, which are deemed out of place.

> Sipping tea on the plaza of the Brunswick Centre, [an official involved in the management of local shops] and I talk through his challenges with retailers in the neighbourhood. He recounts his on-going battles with [one particular shop] to de-clutter their window and forecourt. "It's a listed building, but they don't understand this," he tells me. "The windows are so filled you couldn't see inside. Mary Portas would deem this bad practice. It looks like Aladdin's den where you would be raped and pillaged."
>
> — Field notes, 30 July 2012
> edited to anonymise participants

These sorts of comments reveal both the conflation of material and bodies and an everyday racism. Ethnicity and race are not static, but produced on a daily basis in everyday ways (Alexander & Knowles 2005). They are practiced in the subtleties of our thinking and interactions with each other (Knowles & Harper 2009). Similarly, Swanton (2010a: 2339) writes that race is "something that bodies do in interaction through the relations they form with other bodies, things, and spaces, rather than […] something that bodies possess, or something written onto the body." By thinking through racism as an assemblage, Swanton (2010b: 2334, 2010a) "foregrounds the significance of materiality and affect in processes of social differentiation. Differentiation is at least as much about relations between bodies, things, and spaces as it is about discourses." For Swanton, then, racism is not just about the colour of skin, but about the material assemblages within which these bodies are a part. The untidy material of the shop discussed above comes to stand for the bodies of the shopkeepers. As Saldanha (2006) writes, race is an event where everything can be racialised. The material is used to judge human difference.

The experiences of difference have been discussed as affective, emotional, embodied, and material (see Jones et al. 2014). Like the official's approach to the shop above, Wise (2010: 931) describes how, in Ashfield Australia, white seniors feel a sense of bodily confinement in, and a barrier to entering, Chinese-owned shops which are dimly lit and not visible through the plastered windows. The unfamiliarity of the shops and proprietors is felt in the body. In Wise's accounts of the embodied experience of racism, she notes how "the boundaries of the modern body extend to modern urban forms where distinctions between purity and defilement are encoded into the built environment and the regulatory framework of the city" (Sibley 2001: 244). As expanded below, these notions of purity suggest a racial homogeneity. Like the shops in Ashfield, the danger for those targeted in my neighbourhood is that the embodied experience of racism may be enrolled into institutional approaches of working with marginalised shops, with the effect of destabilising and dehumanising relations (Gilroy 2004).

The shopkeepers' literal place in the world – in the neighbourhood – is created through the curation of the shop. Their practice of making and remaking a place here is about a right to the city (Lefebvre 1968) – both social and material rights to express difference. In making space, these shops may also make space for others too.

Encounter in the shop & the ad hoc-ness of multiculture

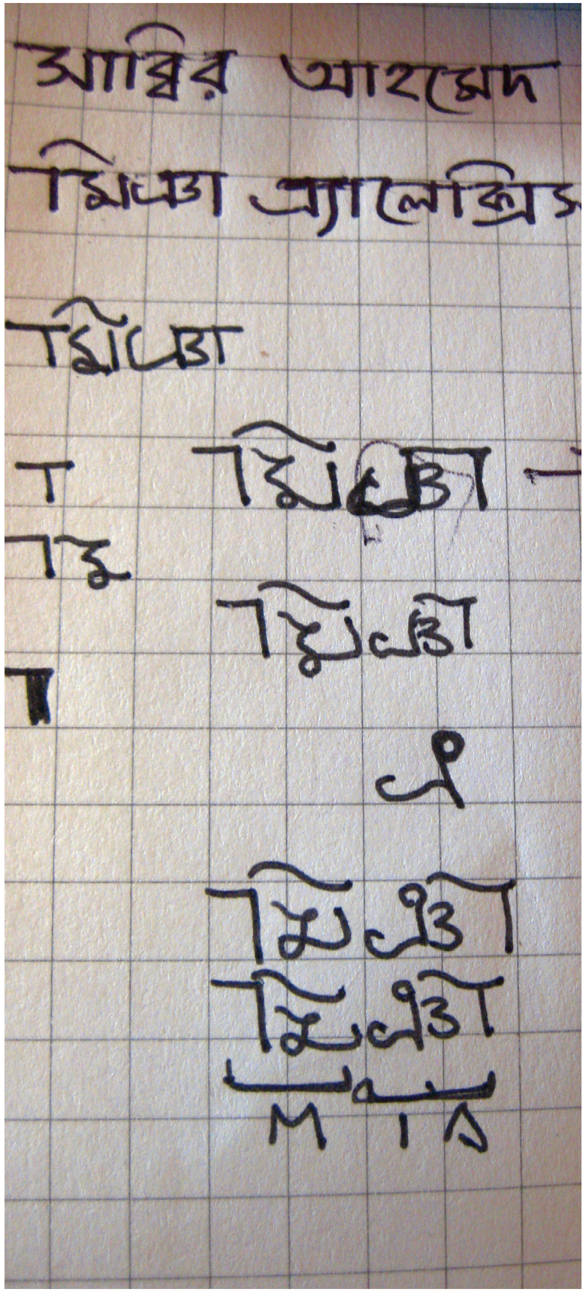
Through their unscripted curation of place, these shops exhibit a certain openness. Here I want to consider how they may create space for possible cross-cultural exchange and encounter. Such a space would be constructive in facing growing concerns about the failure of multiculturalism (Back 2009b). Ten years before the alarming rise of ISIS and the sweeping political gains of UKIP, Gilroy (2004) wrote that living with difference can be seen as a risk. Today, the news is buzzing at a fever pitch with unease over living and sharing with difference. In public discourse and in government policy, immigrants are framed as a problem, represented as poor and demanding, devious and radical (see Back 2007; Gilroy 2004). Anxieties about the consequences of migration in general, and the social cohesion of British Asian Muslims in particular, have come to preoccupy British social policy (Knowles & Harper 2009). While they commit themselves to deal with "the problem", the government's receding role, legacies of racism, and unsettled colonial relations only hamper the situation, colour practices of immigration, and negate meaningful inclusion (Back 2007; Gilroy 2004).

Multiculturalism is not an abstract policy, but "inhabited in real, lived, bounded neighbourhoods" (Wise 2011: 106). Identity and multicultures are formed in the realm of the everyday (Back 1996, see also Pieterse 2007; Wise & Velayuthan 2009). Much has been written about how the city, in particular, offers a place for encounter and exchange, where difference is confronted and may be recognised (Amin 2002; Binnie et al. 2006; Laurier & Philo 2006; Massey 2005; Watson 2009). Often thought about in elite terms, cosmopolitanism has been framed and reframed to consider how multiple experiences of travel or displacement can shape a willingness to engage and an openness to difference (see Hannerz 1996). As "citizens of the world," cosmopolitan bodies see connections beyond nationalism to other ways of connecting (Vertovec 2010); "the strangeness of strangers goes out of focus and other dimensions of a basic sameness can be acknowledged and made significant" (Gilroy 2004: 3). Different sorts of cosmopolitanisms have been described and celebrated, including: "working-class cosmopolitanism" (Werbner 1999), "actually existing cosmopolitanism" (Robbins 1998), "everyday cosmopolitanism" (Ang et al. 2002), "tactical cosmopolitanism" (Landau & Haupt 2007), "critical cosmopolitanism" (Delanty 2006), "domestic cosmopolitanism" (Nava 2006) and "banal cosmopolitanism" (Jackson 2014), where the exotic becomes everyday. These reconceptualisations point to the diverse spaces, bodies, and materials that can be implicated in cross-cultural engagement. They foreground cosmopolitanism as a practice and performance. For Jones and her colleagues (2014: 6) cosmopolitanism is "not about a normative descriptor of settled or desired multicultural relations, but about a way of understanding the ongoing relationships between people and social formations which make one another up, across distance and time." Cosmopolitanism, as "a combination of attitudes, practice and abilities" (Vertovec 2010: 64), demands skill and an understanding of the codes enacted and embedded within social and cultural contexts. Knowles and Harper (2009: 232) draw from Ingold's (2000) notion of skill to develop the idea of migrant skill, inverting "skilled migration" and giving consideration to skills often unrecognised through official challenges of immigration. Skill here is about how we function in the world and come to terms with difference.

Geographies of encounter and various conceptions of cosmopolitanism have a resonant optimism. For Valentine (2008: 324) the ways in which the city is being framed as a site of connection represents a "cosmopolitan turn". She is, however, less sanguine about the potential for meaningful exchange. Valentine (2008: 325, 329) argues that although sociable codes of etiquette are often followed, contact with others does not necessarily signal an ethics of care or respect for difference. Furthermore, she warns that a celebratory approach to urban encounter may blind us to inequalities. Perhaps these can coexist. For Les Back (1996), discourses of racism and multiculture occur simultaneously; popular racism can be embedded in urban multicultures. He terms this a "metropolitan paradox, where momentary escapes from racism are contiguous with ever more complex forms of racial power and domination" (Back 1996: 250-251). This chimes with some of the complex interactions in the shop.

Sometimes I feel like running from the kiosk. I get frustrated at Daleel – angry even – at his remarks, which can be homophobic, racist, and judgemental. He is critical of people on benefits and tells me that all asylum seekers are terrorists. He talks of whole races of people as stupid and spits when he sees anyone drunk or homeless. "I hate this type of man," he says. My stomach churns when he talks about what his wife is "allowed" to do. We have some complex debates and I present my case. He's persistent but values my opinions. I don't think his feelings have changed, but I do think he has become more sensitive when voicing his prejudices around me. His feelings towards some groups seem to contradict the affable interactions he has with people in the kiosk: the hotel employees from Eastern Europe, his favourite customer who works at the Union and who happens to be black. I don't think these warm exchanges are merely put on in the name of selling more candy bars. But it does all complicate the idea of everyday cosmopolitan. Is Daleel cosmopolitan? I don't know. There's a sincere sense of sharing and familiarity on the one hand, but also a lack of openness on the other.

— Field notes, 7 August & 23 August 2012



And still, there may be potential for shifts in recognition and understanding in the shop. For authors like Valentine (2008) and Amin (2002), there is much more promise in the everyday practices of recognition and exchange than in engineered multicultural events and government policies. The everyday provides space for "a politics of small achievements" (Swanton 2010a: 464). Framed in this way, these calls sound like pleas for more looseness, more ad hoc-ness.

The connections between multiculture and ad hoc-ness are worth consideration. The discourse around its order and disorder is not unlike those surrounding the material of the ad hoc shop. Multiculture is both celebrated and feared for its social untidiness. Like the material in the shops, it is threatening when it deviates from grand narratives. For Back (2007: 32), "social order, another one of the new assimilationists' favourite phrases, is centred on a normative whiteness that defines the terms on which the game of assimilation is played out." Efforts to control disorder – to manage multiculture – may aim to purify and perfect communities (Jones et al. 2014: 21; see also Douglas 1966). Sharing place is really hard, and harder for some groups than others (Wise 2010). It's untidy, unfinished, and cannot always be packaged up to sell the city in ways that policy makers might like. But, like the ad hoc aesthetic, the crudeness of multiculture is sincere. Tolerance, by contrast, creates a smooth surface that may conceal power relations (Valentine 2008: 329). It is easy to see how the fear of disorder can so easily slip into racisms. But it is through disorder that place is shared and difference is recognised. Disorder, invention, and informality – cornerstones of adhocism – have been discussed as essential to forge creativities and recognise difference (Jones et al. 2014). Gilroy (2004: 167) calls for a celebration of multiculture's "dissident value [that] is confirmed everywhere in the chaotic pleasures of the convivial postcolonial urban world." "Democracy-enriching dissent" should be prized as a civic asset, he believes (Gilroy 2004: 27). This "throwntogetherness" of people in the city demands inventiveness and improvisation (Massey 2005); it is an ad hoc practice.

Whether they directly advance multicultures in London or not, the ad hoc shops in my neighbourhood do contribute to a banal London-ness that is meaningful, at least to the shopkeepers. Through everyday practices, shopkeepers curate a translocal version of place that is local and global, responsive and inclusive. For Hall and Datta (2010), these sorts of shops may recast the global city. They write that

> the particularity and variety of visual and spatial arrangements in the independent

> shops offer a contrasting, more variegated view of globalisation: one in which the flows of people, objects, ideas and affinities combine, alter and rearrange to create less predictable cultural experiences. (Hall & Datta 2010: 73)

The material complexity of ad hoc shops – the layering – accommodates material difference. It provides a deeply textured surface in which we can find practice, local identity, and mixity. Stuff and identities slip in and out of its topological folds. Through its openness, the shop leaves a space for multiculture. People may not always want to engage, or have the skills to make it meaningful, but the shop is about leaving a space for this to happen.

Conclusions: Rough textures of difference

In this chapter, I highlight some hardships of shopkeeping and some of the more political and social aspects of the shops. I detail issues of precarity and translocality and how these are connected. Through the chapter, I raise a set of politics around material and difference to describe other ways the ad hoc shop is judged. I discuss complicated things that are admittedly uncomfortable to write about – race, racisms, and legal issues. As Les Back (2007) has offered, although we should write with our participants at our side, we needn't see them as heroes or try to paint them into an overly rosy picture. Throughout the chapter, Daleel's story illustrates how the issues tangled up in precarity and translocality are complicated and unresolvable. I make no claims to solve these issues here and, in light of their difficulty, have privileged juxtaposition over synthesis in my stylistic and analytical treatment of them.

In the first section, I outlined ways in which all small shops are challenged in the current retail climate. While the government is trying to "save the high street," a number of policy interventions have been counter-productive. As well as facing these universal challenges, many ad hoc shopkeepers contend with struggles of newness and with being labour market outsiders. I argue that a state of hyper-precarity pervades some of their lives, as a result, not of their ethnicities, but of their particular place and time. Many of these challenges manifest in financial hardship, which has social impacts as well as material, design, and management implications for the shops.

In the second section, I use the notion of topology to describe the translocality of shopkeeping. I argue that objects in the shop, like the Lycamobile SIM cards, fold space together, maintaining and creating relationships – both personal and professional. This section addresses the shops' relationships to the neighbourhood in two ways, which broach the affect of multicultures and belonging. First, I argue that the material in the shop may be conflated with the racialised bodies of the shopkeepers which harbours the potential to position both the shops and their keepers as "out of place." Second, I consider how the everydayness of the shops might – or might not – be sites of meaningful exchange. Here, I reflect on multiculture as ad hoc, which may be most promising in its clutter.

In closing, I want to draw again from the notion of topology as a way to think about difference. As mentioned, the complex texture of the shop is accommodating. It may be seen as a topological device – folding together the past and future, here and there, racisms and multicultures, and the things in between. The stories highlighted here offer an assemblage of meanings, attachments, materials, and emotions. Following Back (2007), these fragments will not assemble into a stable character. "What endures are pieces that can be shared and combined, which conduct identification without requiring a stable identity at its core" (Back 2007: 148). While it may not form a smooth picture, this heterogeneous collection of fragments might prompt us to think about how else the city might be assembled. This opening leads me to my final chapter.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Contemplating the ad hoc

Ad hoc shops have a complicated relationship to the forces of the city. A summary of themes underlines these entanglements and begins drawing out a set of conclusions that cut across the chapter registers of the thesis. Herein too lay the modest contributions of this work: one methodological, one theoretical, one political. But the promise is still embedded somewhere in the messiness of ad hoc. It is sincere and resourceful, complex and layered. Within its folds may lay space to imagine possible alternatives for the city – for its multicultures, for its material difference, for its enchantment. Shifts in planning might prop this space open, letting in a plurality of material expression and affective narratives. Recognition is needed – for the creativity, sincerity, and resourcefulness of ad hoc shops – but how complicated this recognition can be.

Revisiting threads

I began this thesis by asking: how do everyday ad hoc shops work through and on various powerful urban forces? Through the work, I argue that these shops shaped and are shaped by city planning ventures, lively materials and practice, global branding exercises, economic necessity, and the lives of individual shopkeepers. By attending to the minutiae of local material and creative ad hoc practice, I have brought these politics into focus. What's more, I argue that the ad hoc-ness of the shops' material and practice has a politics as well.

By way of summary and synthesis, I will return to the threads of the thesis, but do so here through the 'themes' that have run through chapters rather than the 'registers' upon which each chapter focused (see schematic on page 25). As outlined in the introduction these themes are: the politics of material difference; the spontaneity and liveliness of material; the aesthetics of order and disorder; creative practice and domestication; and the politics of affective atmospheres. These threads vibrate through all registers, but here I will highlight the intersections which resonated most strongly in order to reinforce the conclusions of this research.

The politics of material difference

Throughout the thesis, I argue that the material of the city matters. I show how material is important to a sense of place, the development of identity, and the way the city sees itself. In Chapter Four, the material of the shops is presented as part of the familiarity of the neighbourhood. I demonstrate how the material complexity of the shop is part of its distinct identity, but also establish that this material difference is what sets the shop apart. Difference here is set in contrast to the normative material doctrines which often guide place-making strategies, the configuration of the brand, and more conventional retail establishments. I argue that this material difference is a source of the ad hoc shops' marginalisation. I contend that the material of the shop is seen as discordant by some urban strategists involved in the place-branding exercises of neighbourhood associations, BIDs, high street revitalisation projects, and the King's Cross conglomerate. I argue that change is constant and the material management of the neighbourhood is longstanding, but also that the scale of change with the King's Cross redevelopment may be accelerating pressure on the shops' material. Besides the social change I argue that the accompanying heightened attention and management of neighbourhood aesthetics has put pressure on material that does not conform to place-branding narratives. By using the example of kiosk standardisation, I argue that purification here is not just social, but material – ad hoc material is deemed out of place (Cresswell 1996; Sibley 1988).

I also argue that the material bodies of the shopkeepers are positioned as out of place in some instances. Because the material of the


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shops does not adhere to common codes of "good" design and is instead demarcated by "tastes of necessity" (Gregson & Crewe 1997: 99), I have shown that the shopkeepers are seen, by some, to lack the cultural capital needed to be meaningful parts of the neighbourhood. As I expanded on in Chapter Seven, the difference of bodies represents another way the shops are judged. But, there too, I described the difference of the shop as a site of exchange. I present the shops as places of "metropolitan paradox" (Back 1996: 250), where racisms and cross-cultural encounter happen simultaneously. Despite the prejudice on the part of both officials and shopkeepers, and though individuals may not have the skills to engage in meaningful ways, drawing from Valentine (2008) and Amin (2002), I argue that the shops may still offer an important opportunity to play out the messiness of multiculture.

The politics of material difference also inflect other themes drawn out in the following sections. The shops' practice, for example, also engenders a politics of difference in the way that it multiplies meaning and materials in the shop. As described in Chapters Five and Six, and expanded upon in what follows, the ad hoc practices of shopkeeping bring new meaning to objects and brands, through wear, juxtaposition, repair, and recasting.

The spontaneity & liveliness of material

Throughout the thesis, I argue that ad hoc shopkeeping practice is a co-production of individual creativity and the liveliness of vibrant materials. Following Bennett (2010), in Chapter Five, I contend that the materials in the shop actively work on the practices of the shopkeepers and also have particular material affordances. Approaching material in this way served to revalue the everyday matter of the shop and also see it as agentic. The melting point of chocolate, for example, signalled a loss of revenue and anxieties about consumer trust for Daleel, when boxes of candy bars softened on a hot day. In another instance, I describe how – in conjunction with reams of nylon twine – the density and shape of cinderblocks afford their use as anchors for racks of postcards. I contend that the way these materials are held in constellation signals one moment in their productive lives in and out of the shop. I suggest that the thing power of objects asserts itself in different ways as these objects move between ad hoc solutions in the shop.

As an extension of the vibrancy of matter, the thesis also makes a case for the thing power of the shop's ad hoc assemblage. Throughout the thesis, the texture of place is positioned as active – capable of reworking the meaning of the brand, confronting urban branding exercises, and connecting here and there. Here, the ad hoc assemblage may incite visceral reactions and emotions. As well as having agency, the texture of the shop affords particular practices and configurations. For example, in Chapter Six, I argue that it offers the brand a pliable surface for its interventions; the shop's ad hoc-ness makes it easier for the brand to layer its own material. Consequently, the independent shops come to be more branded than corporate shops. In this way, I argue that the brands depend on the permeability of the shops' materiality for their corporate expressions. The brand is part of the shop and the shop is part of the brand. The texture of the shop also accommodates other sorts of difference. Drawing together notions of topology and translocality, in Chapter Seven, I argue that the complex texture of the shop folds together here and there and is accommodating to various expressions of difference. I revisit this point later in the chapter.

The aesthetics of order & disorder

Throughout the thesis, I argue that the shop is often set in tension with the aesthetic spatial and material narratives of the city and the brand. In Chapter Four, I outline how urban strategists are working towards crafting areas of the


PREMIUM BANANAS
UTC
Fyffes
Bananas
Fyffes
Bananas
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neighbourhood as brands and have made moves towards a uniform look and feeling of place. In Chapter Five, my images and descriptions illustrate how there is a sense of order in the ad hoc shops. And still, as discussed in Chapter Four, their relative heterogeneity has become contentious in light of efforts to streamline the material of the city. I argue that efforts to de-clutter the streetscape and shops are part of wider movements seeking a modern urban aesthetic that may clash with the complexity of the shops.

In Chapter Six, I showed how the ad hoc deployment of the corporate brand has been judged part of that clutter by urban strategists. I presented the tension between the brand narrative of the neighbourhood and the ad hoc branding of the shops, arguing that ordering and streamlining the ad hoc brandscape had become part of official efforts to clean up the neighbourhood.

Notions of order and disorder are also brought to the fore in the connections between multiculture and the ad hoc. In Chapter Seven, I argue that the disorder of the shop and multiculture have been described as threatening in similar ways. Drawing from Gilroy (2004) and Back (2007), I discuss how officially sanctioned multiculturalism and conventional retail design both strive towards easily packaged grand narratives, but argue that they may both have the most promise when disorder, invention, and informality are allowed to forge creativities and recognise difference (Jones et al. 2014).

Creative practice & domestication

I present shopkeeping as a creative practice capable of reworking global objects, bringing new local meanings to brands and things. As described in Chapter Five, by realising the affordances of objects, shopkeeping practice may reimagine their possibilities. I discuss how this practice brings difference to the sameness of branded objects and makes the individual biographies of things proliferate. As an extension of this, in Chapter Six, I argue that branded objects are imbued with the ethical surplus of the shopkeepers. This may alternately domesticate the brand or feed off the shopkeepers' global identities to sell products. As well as illustrating the way Jim re-bags his Haribo sweets to respond to the needs of the locals, I present Lycamobile as benefitting from the work of the shopkeepers' global bodies to create the aura of global connectedness.

Though brands are powerful, so too is this practice. I argue that – in conjunction with material – the creative work of the shopkeepers averts the possibilities of colonisation by the brands. Instead, I argue that shops constitute ad hoc brandscapes – visibly made up composites of trademarks, logos, and attachments – which creatively adapt and sample brands for local purposes. As well as confronting the power of the brand, I also argue that the creative curatorial work in the shops makes these commercial places personal. Though shopkeepers may work through conventions and look for inspiration elsewhere, each shopkeeper has an individual style of working, engages in their own embodied practice, responds to a unique environment, and develops individual relationships with brand representatives. Together this makes their shop their own. I argue that this is an important part of the difference of these shops compared to mainstream retail.

Finally, across Chapters Five and Seven, I argue that the creative practice of shopkeeping is essential for the survival of the shop. The mending, making-do, rejigging, and sharing space in the forecourt, for example, are all part of the economising necessary in light of the precarious circumstances in which shops are kept. These practices exhaust space and material, but also creatively rework it to avoid expenditures.


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The politics of affective atmospheres

Throughout the thesis, I argue that affect is not just embodied and felt, but also wrapped up in the politics of those feeling bodies, notions of taste, and the meanings of corporate and neighbourhood brands. In Chapters Two, Four, and Six, I outline how affective atmosphere is engineered by brands and by the city. This influences both the feeling of place and the treatment of ad hoc shops. Throughout Chapter Four, for example, I argue that notions of urban vibrancy and neighbourhood belonging work on an affective level. The implications of neighbourhood change and urban narrative, then, are not only social, but concern the feeling of place and its texture. Accordingly, I have argued that the affective qualities of place are politicised in their notions of taste and value (see also Holloway & Hones 2007). The value of the shops is wrapped up in their affective atmospheres. For Shrove and her colleagues (2007: 147) "value is determined in relation to the always changing practices in which products are integrated." I have argued that, as well as bestowing different values on the objects, particular modes of ordering in the shops also shift the perceived value of the shop itself. The material of the shops and their ad hoc atmosphere generates particular attitudes and feelings that guide official treatment of the shops and policy. I have illustrated that some urban strategists may find the shop's atmosphere contemptible.

As part of the engineering of affective atmosphere, I show that notions of urban vibrancy are important to some urban strategists, but argue that this vibrancy is not conceived as material. In conjunction with efforts to de-clutter the landscape, vibrancy is positioned as social, but not always inclusively so. I highlight how the vibrancy of particular bodies with particular sorts of cultural capital is positioned as most desirable. Following Bennett (2010), I contend that the vibrant matter of the shop challenges the modern urban aesthetics and de-cluttered surfaces on which this very particular sort of social vibrancy is supposed to take place.

Following from this, in Chapter Seven, the politics of urban affective atmospheres also emerge with the added complexity of race. I argue that the affective qualities of the ad hoc shop have a tendency for conflation with the racialised bodies of the shopkeepers, implicating exclusion of both bodies and affective material (see also Swanton 2010a, 2010b; Wise 2010). I show that this may engender an everyday racism and patronising approach to the shop. Following Witz and colleagues (2003), the racialised bodies of shopkeepers are associated with a certain aesthetic through their embodied dispositions, which is contentious both in that it does not align with the aesthetics of the neighbourhood and is different than the groomed dispositions of many conventional retail establishments. Despite this conflation of bodies and materials, I argue that the aesthetics of the shops are not ethnically determined but driven by local material and practice. As I discuss in Chapter Seven, a shop owned by someone from Bangladesh has the same affective atmosphere as another run by Cockney shopkeepers. Knowing this, the everyday racism on display here is more poignant.

Finally, throughout the thesis, I also draw out the affective atmosphere of the brand. Brands largely work at an affective register, labouring to craft aura and feelings. Though brands often aim for totalised brandscapes (Klingmann, 2007), I show how the heterogeneity of the shop's affect precludes domination by one brand narrative. Instead, an ad hoc brandscape emerges. Though it cannot be disciplined, I have argued that brands try to increase their management of the shop's atmosphere with larger and bolder interventions. I suggest that the materials and labours of brand managers contribute to the shops' affective atmosphere and may lie in tension with the atmosphere imagined by local urban strategists.

Within these themes lie the original contributions of this work. Here, I make them more explicit.

Contribution & openings

This project began not with a theory to prove, but with a set of interests around the city, everyday commercial places, and the politics of everyday creativity. The result has been similarly expansive. Throughout the thesis, I chose to explore a set of broad connections instead of concentrating attention on one fixed aspect of the shops or shopkeeping. As outlined via the themes, though my net was cast wide, a set of patterns emerged from my encounters with the shops. Throughout the project, I endeavoured to engage with these shops without unduly universalising them. Indeed the definition of ad hoc – "for this" – implies a lack of generality. As discussed previously, this represents one set of stories of London's ad hoc shops. With knowledge ever partial, I cannot make great claims. This said, the project does add to the conversations about shops, urban development, and the politics of creativity. The original contributions of this work are threefold. They are methodological, theoretical, and political.

Methodological

This thesis represents an experiment and argument in visual storytelling. As I explore in Chapter Three, the form the thesis takes is intimately connected to my research subject and approach. This thesis draws together tales told by different media; it is an assemblage of critical and reflective writing, photographs and photomontage, diagrams and mappings, voices of shopkeepers and others, and history and lay knowledge. My own creative production – of visual culture and prose – has a presence here. Though I do not make claims to its aesthetic value, its development formed part of my research practice, and, as such, works to form part of my argument about these shops. In the spirit of vernacular curation, I endeavoured to capture the feeling and forces of ad hoc shops through the use of this material.

This collection is visually curated through experiments in layout and form. In particular, I argue for the use of montage as a way to narrate the shops: accommodating a diversity of material and providing space for juxtaposition, synergies, and tensions. The layout reflects how I see the shops: loose but organised, complex and layered. I hope this also opens space for the consideration of other stories and possibilities. Combining these approaches was meant to serve the complexity and contradictions of the shops, while also challenging forms of knowledge that have static or singular points of view.

Upon reflection, it was not always easy to balance the rigours of academic scholarship with my desire for openness in the work. I struggled, for example, with the degree to which the images should illustrate my arguments, and perhaps erred on the side of rigour over openness. Would the thesis have worked by presenting the visual in pinhole format only? This may be a possibility for future presentations of this work, but was not a risk I took here. Similarly, would sharper more staccato shifts between the field notes and other

text have improved the candour of the work or made it incoherent to the reader? Again, I can only speculate.

The juxtapositions of image and text would not have been possible with a traditional thesis format, but presented a distinct set of challenges as well. I endeavoured to use images with purpose. In some places, for example, this meant there was no need for visuals as part of the argument, so white space was left hanging open. In this way, the images were not filler, or supplementary, but had a place and reason behind their placement. Did this puzzle the reader when images were perhaps expected at each turn of the page? As mentioned, at the outset, this was an experiment. Though it may not have been successful at each turn, I trust the layout and visuals further the understanding of these places and their complexity, and hope it will show one possible path as more geographers explore creative formats for their theses.

Theoretical

As discussed in my review of the themes above, this thesis relates everyday feelings with politics. In particular, it makes original connections between everyday affective materialisms and the forces of urban planning and change. These connections are threefold. First, as illustrated, my work shows that the affective register is important to the effective deployment of institutional strategies. Notions of urban vibrancy and neighbourhood branding strategies, for example, endeavour to craft particular affective atmospheres that are negotiated against the everyday affective forces of the shop. Second, I present how matter is important to processes of neighbourhood change. In particular, I demonstrate how the displacement and purification of material may be part of processes of gentrification, widening the understandings of neighbourhood change beyond the social. Third, I show that affective registers are bound up in notions of value and taste. As a consequence, the affective atmospheres of places are politicised and give rise to issues of difference and belonging.

Political

My political contribution concerns the intersection of my material interests with two prevalent public debates and discourses: the "death of the high street," which continues to echo in the media and policy documents (see Duncan 2014; Economic Committee 2013); and alleged "failure of multiculturalism" and the associated "weakening of our collective identity" (PM David Cameron 2011) which has been similarly unrelenting. Much scholarly and policy research addresses these themes, but not at a material register. The shops speak to these debates. On the first point, I argue that the liveliness and animation of matter in the shops energises the high street in conjunction with the vernacular creativity of the shopkeepers. The work is resourceful and innovative, and the materials lively. Together they bring about a sense of local identity and animation on the street. On the second, my work presents how the material heterogeneity of shops has the potential to be convivial and welcoming of difference. As discussed earlier, though people may not always want to engage, or have the skills to make it meaningful, the shop leaves a space for this to happen. Through its openness, I argue, the shop leaves a space for multicultural encounter. Though I make a case for the shops' capacities to challenge these notions in their own way, their negative institutional reception precludes this appreciation. As discussed later, my thesis works towards this recognition.

Openings

Before I move on, I want to suggest directions for future study. This project pulls a number of diverse strands together, but there are many still to connect. It offers a number of possible spaces for successive research. These areas expand beyond my close focus on the local practice of shopkeeping, its materials, and keepers. For example, attention to the translocal biographies of objects in the shop would further draw out the connections between the lives of the shopkeepers and the objects they curate. This might trace the objects from their point of production, through the shop, and into the lives of consumers. Additional research might also follow the brands more closely. This could include investigating the design and production of the branded materials that circulate in the shops. It could also consider the ethical surplus of brands in the shop and how the meaning of the brands shifts in relation to others in the ad hoc brandscape. Furthermore, although my accounts highlight consumer presence in the shopkeeper's mind, I did not directly address consumer practice or perception. Future research might ask how consumers interact with the shops and the politics of the ad hoc.

On the ad hoc-ness of shops & shaping place

With the thesis summarised, contributions presented, and future research suggested, I want to now take a small step back to consider the ad hoc-ness of shops, what it means, and what it might offer. Irrespective of the larger political connections made throughout the thesis, I argue that the shops have value in their own right. This value relates in part to their social potential. They are meaningful to local people, to the lives of the shopkeepers, and as a part of an urban multiculture. There is a warmth and conviviality to this sort of ad hoc creativity, and an ethics in the material practice as well. Their value also relates to the meaningfulness of practice and material. Akin to the adhocism of Jencks and Silver (2013), I show that ad hoc shopkeeping practice is not haphazard, but purposeful and measured. I describe it as a responsive practice and one that adapts to economic and material change. Following Hallam and Ingold (2007), I show how creativity and innovation are continually infused in the shop to keep it stable (see also Graham & Thrift 2007). While it sustains the shop, ad hoc practice also exposes the matter of things and the ways of working with that matter, thereby challenging a world of design which so often appears as finished, limiting our perception and appreciation of the materials of which it is composed (Anusas & Ingold 2013). Throughout the thesis, then, I contend that shopkeeping practice embodies the ethics of resourcefulness, attention, and sincerity, which is felt in the shops' affective atmosphere and material. I argue that this deserves appreciation.

This project also maintains that the everyday vernacular practice of the shop shapes place in meaningful ways. More generally, I have illustrated how mundane creativity produces urban space. The ad hoc ways in which this creativity is performed tell us about the city. The ad hoc-ness of practice in the shops works with – not on – the liveliness of the material. It does not endeavour to mute the materials, but allows them to reveal their histories and contribute to the layered stories about place. In this way, ad hoc ways of working shape the city while staying interested in the rich residues of local experience. I contend that the ad hoc is an urban condition. In the neighbourhood tour in Chapter Four, I outline how the city is a creative project most often produced in an ad hoc way that responds to the place and the moment. However, I also present how planning projects have the potential to rub out material traces of the past and limit the ad hoc creativity in the city. My advocacy for the ad hoc might seem like a sort of anti-planning. And following Illich (1973), professionals can certainly be disabling to the everyday production of culture. Though I believe planning is important, I hope this thesis opens up questions about who owns urban culture and its production.

Though I will not discard planning, I will make a call here for more ad hoc-ness in the way the city is planned, or indeed for space that is unplanned. Not unlike Franck and Stevens' (2007) call for loose space, I believe a recognition of ad hoc-ness

and its potentialities should translate into space that is less determined and less programmed, to permit material expressions of ad hoc-ness and difference. But my call here goes further: it is not just about the provision of loose open space, but about avoiding the tendency to over-determine the affective register of the city as well. As highlighted throughout the thesis, when the neighbourhood's use- and sign-value are tipped off balance, its space comes to limit how it may be used and who has access to its material and affective expressions.

Throughout the thesis, I have suggested how leaving space open for ad hoc-ness generates even more openness. Drawing from notions of topology, I argue that the textures and folds of ad hoc shops create an atmosphere that embraces and accommodates difference. This counters tendencies of global culture to flatten out the built environment and its use-value (see Lash & Lury 2007). The layers, pores, and folds of ad hoc surfaces are sensuous. They create a dense space for stuff, people, stories, memories, feelings, and identities. The material hosts co-existing narratives and contributes to London's distinct urban aesthetic sensibilities. As described earlier, this includes various manifestations of difference and permits the ad hoc expressions of multiculture. Thus allowing space for the ad hoc shop is allowing space for other possibilities.

Through its openness and complex textures, then, ad hoc-ness imagines alternatives. This potential becomes more acute and political in the way the shop challenges material and affective trends in the neighbourhood. Such urban improvisation might offer the chance to reimagine the city. In Chapter Two I discuss how DIY urbanisms and urban interventions aim to rework the built environment, challenge our normative experience, and ask about the potential for its democratisation (Iveson 2013; Pinder 2005). These modes of intervention are often playful, creative, but most often mindful of their negotiations. For Pinder (2005: 398) "[t]o intervene through creative practice in public space today […] is to enter into a crucial struggle over the meanings, values and potentialities of that space at a time when its democracy is highly contested." I would like to argue that the creativity of the ad hoc shop engages in a similar struggle over meanings, values, and potentialities, but does so in a way that is more intuitive. In fact, through the very banality of its interventions, I argue that the ad hoc shop may have even more potential to challenge certain urban conventions. For one, its interventions cannot be co-opted to sell the space it is trying to defend. This contrasts with the interventions of artists, for example, whose artistic novelties are more easily commodified and, in some cases, may be used to support the very urban processes they criticise (see Pinder 2005; Mould 2014). Conversely, because the shops defy the sexiness of the arts, they cannot be enrolled in the agendas and narratives of the city. Furthermore, the most banal everyday urban practices and invention may offer possibilities to explore the meaning of the city (see Pinder 2013, citing Lefebvre). There are openings in the folds of the shop, for the shopkeepers, for materials and for others who want to test their possibilities. To test "what could be: the potentialities for more socially just, democratic and emancipatory urban spaces and ways of living" (Pinder 2013: 3). As I describe, thinking beyond the narratives of the neighbourhood brand, and reimagining multiculture may be part of this, but there may also be other opportunities, surprises, and encounters within these folds.

By extension, there may be ways the shops' ad hoc-ness reconfigures our interpretation of the city. Might an ad hoc sensibility serve to re-enchant contemporary modes of urban life that have been become dull and predictable (Bennett 2001; Woodyer & Geoghegan 2012)? Has the ad hoc-ness of the shop re-enchanted commercial environments which are increasingly dominated by chain stores and trite design conventions? And by extension, through its creative reworking, has the ad hoc shop been able to re-enchant the brand by bringing new life to homogeneous commodities? The city too may be re-enchanted and come to life through ad hoc practices of the shop that offer surprise, animation, and conviviality. Such an academic reframing is provoking, but also complicated. In this final section, I turn my attention to another set of possibilities around how to recognise the ad hoc shop.

On the politics of recognition

The ad hoc shops embody an ethos that is widely revered in other forms. In my research I found them to be creative, entrepreneurial, flexible, and improvisatory. As discussed at the conclusion of Chapter Two, there is some irony that the city is both celebrating ad hoc-ness in other modes – including pop-up shops, DIY urbanism, and meanwhile spaces – and also working to save independent shops, while at the same time putting pressure on these ones. To me, this signals a need to recognise the shops in a different way. However, recognition is not straightforward.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that work in the shops is a form of commercial vernacular creativity. The economic impetus of the shops cannot be overlooked – the shops represent the livelihoods of the shopkeepers and contribute to the economy. These are marginalised spaces of capital. But they are spaces of ingenuity too. Many of the shopkeepers I encountered embody the spirit of creative entrepreneurs. However, on account of their material politics, they do not represent the idealised type of entrepreneur as imagined by the city nor by creative economic policy.

In their book on vernacular creativity, Edensor and his colleagues (2010: 7, 4) call on us to revalue everyday, marginalised, alternative, and "downright square" forms of creativity that are not "market ready" – forms, they contend, which are often ignored by creative city agendas and regeneration projects led by arts and culture. In embracing the marginalised – and compiling their collection – these editors hope to "move us towards a more holistic, diverse and socially inclusive creative city strategy" (Edensor et al 2010: 1). What does it mean to enrol the shops in a creative city agenda? What does it mean to recognise these places at all?

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is potential to exoticise the difference of the shop and wryly relish their kitsch appeal. A similar disservice comes to the shops and their keepers by embracing them tokenistically as a means of animating an increasingly homogenised urban environment. Either approach suggests a commodification of their difference. Traps are also set to romanticise the DIY. There is, perhaps, a patronising sense of irony in raising consciousness about unselfconscious practices. Though I highlight the shops, I have tried not to be precious about them. This has not always been easy to do.

Scholarly and popular refrains warn that lauding the corner shop is a middle-class occupation (Jack 2010; Miller 2005). There is a tendency, so it goes, for the middle class to erroneously believe that the corner shop is a site of working class patronage and community hub. Though we have a sentimental attachment to them and want to protect them, we don't actually use them ourselves. And as we fight the opening of Tescos in efforts to keep small shops alive – where we can pay more for our groceries in order to maintain our nostalgic views of community – we are preserving brand deserts that starve working

class populations of what they really want: cheap access to food and jobs.

Recognition is complicated further, of course, by the fact that some shopkeepers would rather not work in this profession. As described in Chapter Seven, it is precarious work: low pay, long hours, little stability, and pressure from urban strategists can make shopkeeping unrewarding. Further still, I have argued that the ad hoc-ness of the shop is a result of financial challenge. As such, I am ambivalent about celebrating the shops – celebrating a way of working that is, at times, determined by their deprivation. This would serve only to reduce the shop to an object of nostalgia – a nostalgia for the material traces of economic struggle.

To return to the notion of recognising creativity in the city, then, I want to revisit some creative city critiques raised briefly in Chapter Two to explain why I resist the shops' enrolment in that framework. Creative city strategies see diversity as a raw material that can be used to attract the affluence and footloose capital of the creative class (Florida 2002). A city's ethnic minorities, gay population, and artists are among those promoted by the creative city agenda as an inspiring backdrop on which cultural industries may flourish. Though the marketing of diversity may appear celebratory, the economic agendas have been described as largely privileging elites at the expense of the marginalised groups whose bodies and creative production are often used to attract even more affluent people (Bayliss 2007; Peck 2005; Leslie & Hunt 2013; Mommaas 2004; Rantisi et al. 2006; Sager 2011; Shearmur 2007). As mentioned previously, not all bodies and creative practices are "market ready" (Edensor et al 2010: 4). Edensor and his colleagues (2010: 7) write that "[c]ultural regeneration, it would seem, grinds to a halt when it encounters working-class places." In the case of ad hoc shops, perhaps this is not undesirable. Would we want them culturally regenerated? Would the shopkeepers? As argued earlier in the thesis, regeneration strategies tend to de-clutter, homogenise, and work towards spatial narratives that are exclusionary – socially and materially. Cultural regeneration of the shops would likely signal the loss of ad hoc-ness, closing down a potential for openness in the city.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that shops are economic spaces of creativity. However, in light of the tokenistic ways in which creative city agendas treat difference, and knowing the potential already for exoticisation of the shop, I resist enrolling the shop under a creative economy framework. Doing so would only further marginalise the shop while obscuring the structural inequalities that challenge it. As Wilson and Keil (2008) argue, the innovations of the urban poor cannot be properly recognised by creative class approaches, even though they represent the real "creative class" in their adaptability and resourcefulness. Not all ad hoc shopkeepers face issues of poverty, but my fieldwork revealed that, for many, life is not easy.

While recognition under the creative economy banner as it is currently formulated may not be helpful, I want to recognise the shop's creativity in a different way. But how? At a policy level, recognition of the shops' work is important. As Gibson and Klocker (2005: 101) write:

> Contemporary urban-social policy needs the kind of imagination that can understand something of the texture of poverty and working-class lives as ordinary and extraordinary ways of being. Without such thinking, working-class people and places can only ever be "less than" those in whose image they are reconstructed.

I hope the thesis has made a step in this direction in its calls to recognise the honesty, ingenuity, and inclusiveness that works through practices of vernacular city building in ad hoc shops.

My calls for recognition here are not about enshrining the ad hoc shop, or having its creativity officially recognised, but are instead about letting it get on with what it does (if indeed it wants to keep doing so). Most importantly, I am appealing here to leave space in the gentrified city for this to happen – physical space, but also affective space. As I have shown, there are latent possibilities in moments of spontaneity, vibrant matter, and sincere material practice. The texture crafted by ad hoc practices has the potential to accommodate difference of all sorts and to reimagine alternatives. As Jencks and Silver (2013: 185) write, "[o]pportunities for the future depend upon everyone's access to all the choices. Adhocism is a way to seeing how many choices there are."

Image list

Images were created by the author unless otherwise specified. When multiple images appear on a page, they are numbered left to right, top to bottom.

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